

RAPE AND REVELATION

The Descent to the
Underworld in Modernism

Evans Lansing Smith

UNIVERSITY
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TO MY WIFE MICHAELA



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Preface

This book reaffirms the importance of myth for Modernism and the importance of the text in literary criticism. With respect to the former, my work is unique in its sustained focus on the single most important myth in Modernism: the descent to the underworld. With respect to the latter, my thesis is rigorously substantiated by textual citation. Hence, Chapters 1-6 focus largely on major works by the major writers of the period, showing how the descent to the underworld functions contextually. In the Introduction and Conclusion, the reader will find more theoretical analysis of the fact that the descent is so crucial to Modernism, while Chapter 7 explores the importance of the myth in the fields of science, painting, and thanatology.

Although my approach is fundamentally archetypal, drawing extensively on the work of James Hillman, Carl Jung, and Joseph Campbell, my method is primarily new critical in its reliance on the text for support of the thesis. In the conclusion, however, I develop material of interest to reader response critics, and I explore the mysteries of the creative process itself, seeing that process in the context of the life histories and historical moment of the Modernists.

This book represents the fruit of over ten years of work in the field of literature and mythology, dating back to 1977, when I joined a group of travelers studying the Arthurian Romance in Northern France under the tutelage of the late Joseph Campbell. In 1978 I had the good fortune to repeat that experience in Egypt during a two week seminar on the Nile led by Professor Campbell. My debt to that noble man is therefore beyond measure, both professionally and personally. He was my guide between the Scylla of existential nihilism, and the Charybdis of mystical renunciation.

I am also indebted to readers of this book in its earlier forms, and to editorial encouragement from various quarters. I would also like to thank Murray Stein for his valuable criticism, and James Hillman, for reading the manuscript during a stormy weekend on the shores of Lago Maggiore, at the Eranos Conference of 1987. In addition, Bill Bernard turned up at the crucial moment to lead me through the maze of Word Perfect, and to help produce this book. I want also to thank my family, those living and those passed on, with especial thanks to my wife Michaela, who accepted the vicissitudes of academic life, bore with me, and gave birth to two lovely children along the way.

All Soul's Day, 1989

Introduction

The Four Chambers of the Underworld

The descent to the underworld is the single most important myth for Modernist authors. Nearly all of the major writers from 1895-1945 use the myth as a central allusion in major works. The myth gives the works that "shape and significance" which T.S. Eliot saw to be the consequence of the "mythic method" ("Ulysses"). Furthermore, the composition of these works tends to coincide with a crisis in the writers' lives, analogous to the descent to the underworld. This breakdown in the inner sphere is reflected outwardly by the cultural catastrophe of World War I, and by certain other developments in the arts and sciences of the times. Hence, the myth gives that shape and significance to the works and lives of the Modernists which I delineate in this book, through a series of close readings of major texts which allude to the underworld.¹

In each case, the stress of biographical and cultural conditions precipitates a crisis analogous to the descent to the underworld, during which the mythic patterns shaping the lives and works of the Modernists are revealed: the *nekylia* leads to the revelation of the archetypal forms of the imagination. From 1912-1916, for example, C.G. Jung experienced such a crisis, which he referred to as his personal descent to the underworld, during which the myths he lived by were revealed as the basis for all his future work.² He discussed this relationship between the underworld and the archetypal "categories of the imagination" in his commentary on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, where he observes that during the soul's journey after death "the universal dispositions of the mind ... analogous to Plato's forms (*eidola*)" are revealed (517-518). Indeed, Jung comments that the initiatory revelation occurring at the moment of death corresponds to "the transformation of the unconscious that occurs under analysis" (523), thus suggesting that the descent to the underworld was the central myth of his psychotherapy.

James Hillman has recently elaborated upon this relationship between Hades and *eidola*, those "ideas that form and shape life" (*Dream* 51). These are the seed forms of psyche stored in its underworld granary. His work is the most comprehensive and precise in its focus on the relationship between crisis and the creative descent to the underworld central to an archetypal poetics of Modernism. Hillman sees the abduction of Persephone and her marriage to Hades as a transition from ego to soul. Where the former represents the reality principle (the engagement in the normal concerns of waking life), the latter represents the imaginal principle: "Soul is imagination", Hillman writes, an "imagining substrate of consciousness" (*Re-Visioning* x., 69), and a "source of images" (*Archetypal* 6). This theory suggests a poetic basis of consciousness, which is structured by the archetypes (*Re-Visioning* xi.). Since "the word *eidolon* (Plato's fundamental idea or image) relates to Hades himself (*aidoneus*) and with *eidōs*", Persephone's abduction signifies her dissolution into the archetypal images of the underworld (Hillman, *Dream* 51). The rape represents a "transition from the material to the psychic perspective" (53).³

The lives and works the Modernists bear out this insight that the *nekylia* activates the archetypal forms of the imagination. Each experienced a severe life crisis which coincided with the composition of major works which allude to the descent into Hades. Indeed, the Modernists themselves develop their own terminology to express this apocalyptic relationship between the descent and the revelation of the fundamental patterns shaping life and art. Ezra Pound's term for this shaping energy was vortex, a "patterned integrity ... persisting undeformable while many languages, imaginations, cultures ... have flowed through it", the oldest example of which was Homer's *nekylia*, translated in Pound's first Canto (Kenner 147-149). Spirits of the dead also dance through Eliot's lines in *Four Quartets*, where he repeatedly uses the simple word "pattern" to express the shaping powers discovered by the poem. Thomas Mann lights upon this fundamental pattern, which he calls the "prototype and abstract of humanity", during his "Descent into Hell" recorded in the Prelude to his Joseph novels (23). In *The Death of Virgil*, Hermann Broch uses a variety of terms for the *eidola* revealed as Virgil lies dying: the "dream-form of all images" (81), the "seed of every symbol" in the depths of Hades (159), the "form which is the pattern of all forms" (212), and "true image and the arch-image" (477), all of which express Broch's notion of the "*Urbild aller Bilder*" (Schlant 115).

W.B. Yeats calls the shaping power behind an artist's life and work the "daimon", which he understood as ancestral spirits of the dead come alive in the images of great poems (Olney 191; Langbaum 173). Yeats places the ordering principles of the imaginal in the underworld, identifying the daimon as an intermediary spirit of the dead who informs the development of both the individual genius and history itself. Each individual, he argues, has a daimon proper to himself who shapes his life by creating a myth that unifies being (Olney 119, 191, 215). Furthermore, daimonic images emerge at the end of a Great Year, like the rough beast in "The Second Coming," presaging the shape

and meaning of the historical period to come (Langbaum 193).

That the dead shape future lives (Langbaum 207) and function as the daimon behind the crisis which forces genius to create its greatest work (Langbaum 190) relates the notion of the daimon to Hillman's understanding of the *eidola* of the underworld as images and shades which shape and govern life. Hillman also uses the Jungian term archetype to refer to those mythogenetic fields shaping fantasy and behaviour.⁴ Hillman's strict focus on psyche, however, and on the imaginal as the non-material factor informing development, easily lends itself to literary theory, since literature is fundamentally concerned with imagination and poesis. The following chapters develop this notion of an archetypal poetics, based on the concept of the underworld as the "informing archetype or pattern" (Vickery, *Impact* 31) shaping the lives and works of the Modernists.

This sense of the underworld as a kind of mythogenetic field is reflected not only in the lives and works of the writers, but also more generally in the overall development of Modernist literature and in the cultural history of the period. Historically, the myth was tragically enacted in World War I, when many men lived from day to day in the trenches. In science, the shift from mechanistic physics to the quantum relativity of Einstein and Bohr parallels this descent to the underworld as an emphasis on the atomic energy fields underlying all material phenomenon which the physicist David Bohm calls the "implicate order."⁵

The development of Modernism parallels these radical changes in science initiated by Einstein in 1905. In modern painting, what we see is exactly the transition from a depiction of solid objects discretely isolated in a world of realistic surfaces, to a revelation of the underlying patterns of abstract formal energies that quantum physics describes as the implicate order. This development is very clearly seen in the careers of Picasso, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Klee, and others. In their work, the emphasis on abstraction and design is, as Northrop Frye says analogous to "the use of myth in Joyce or Cocteau, or the use of folk-tale in Mann" (31). And of course the discovery and analysis of the unconscious in the psychology of Freud and Jung parallels these artistic descents, with their effort to designate and describe the basic structures of the mind.

This conception of the underworld as a repository of the archetypal forms of the mind which give shape and significance to life and art suggests a view of Hades as a granary where the seed forms of the imaginal are stored. Although I emphasize this aspect of Hades in the analyses which follow, the underworld can also be approached in Modernism as an ancestral crypt, as a sacred site of initiatory transformation (*temenos*), or as an inferno.

As the crypt of the ancestral dead, the underworld contains those great poets of the tradition whose voices haunt the work of Eliot, Joyce, and Pound.

Pound told Yeats that "the Descent into Hades from Homer" would be one of the two themes structuring the Cantos (*A Vision* 4), and by beginning in Canto 1 with a redaction of the *Nekuia* of Andreas Divus, Pound alerts us to the fact that much of what follows will be a return of the dead, whose poetic voices will be given new life in his own translations. Similarly, in Eliot and Lowry, the myriad whisperings of (among others) the shades of Marvell, Spenser, Wagner, Baudelaire, Dante, Augustine, Shakespeare, Webster, Ovid, Kyd, Virgil, Nerval, etc. echo throughout *The Waste Land* and *Under the Volcano*, filling all the desert with inviolable voices. In *Ulysses*, Joyce has the voices of the dead speak at every street corner of Dublin, and at every stage of gestation and delivery during the chapter when Mrs. Purefoy's child is being born, so that the developing embryo sheds the skin of every major prose style in the history of English literature. In *Finnegans Wake*, the "funferal" of HCE's dream includes the entire cycle of civilization, with all the voices of the ancestral dead echoing relentlessly in the vaporous crypt of the dreamer's drunken brain. And passages from Virgil are sprinkled throughout Hermann Broch's epic work treating the death of the poet.

As inferno, the metaphor of the underworld is used in Modernism to explore the dark side of psyche and history. James Hillman begins his book on the dream and the underworld with a discussion of Freud's description of the unconscious as a "psychological underworld" inhabited by "figures ... fixed in their repetitions, unredeemable" and eternally suffering (*Dream* 18, 22). It is this notion of the underworld that Conrad exploits in *Heart of Darkness*. Kurtz represents the Satanic underside of European civilization, and the fundamental horror of life as well. He is unredeemable, possessed by blood-lust and greed, and full of self-loathing. Strangely enough, the other modernist writer to fully exploit this aspect of the underworld is D.H. Lawrence, whose preoccupation with the "rivers of dissolution" running beneath the surface of modern life in *Women in Love* and whose vision of a Mexico inhabited by ghosts, spectres, and devils in *The Plumed Serpent* comes closest to Conrad's deep pessimism. Thomas Mann also concerns himself with this circle of hell, both in the disease-ridden labyrinth of *Death in Venice*, and in his conception of Nazi Germany's pact with the devil in *Doctor Faustus*. Later in the century, Malcolm Lowry, Hermann Broch, and Thomas Pynchon concur in their visions of life during World War II as a catastrophic inferno inhabited by demons of political and sexual lust.

This notion of psyche and world as infernal might be called an Adlerian, Freudian, or Nietzschean view, fundamentally concerned with man's will to power. A slightly less cruel vision inspires Eliot, who sees the Londoners crossing Westminster Bridge as the dead in a higher circle of Dante's inferno. For Eliot, modern life is a moral wasteland, across which apathetic spectres wander, like Hermann Broch's "sleepwalkers", aimlessly lost in a labyrinth lacking direction or significance. Eliot's "hollow men" haven't the grandeur of full fledged devils, but seem nevertheless locked eternally in the hell of their own ennui and lack of spiritual energy. They are also sexually repressed or

impotent, and unable, like Kurtz or Gerald Crichton, to be swept under by a genuinely demonic desire.

Joyce calls these figures "the dead", and identifies them with the spiritual paralytics he depicts in *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*. Yeats, perhaps, saw these dead as those who had lost a sense of ceremonial innocence in a world threatened by a flood of anarchy, and Lawrence recognized the denizens of this circle of hell in those men and women who kept the mechanisms of modern society turning, without questioning the motives and consequences of their actions (Thomas Brangwen, the miner of Wiggiston and his wife Winifred, along with Gerald Crichton exemplify this category). Mann too reflects upon the spiritually uninformed burghers and Prussian technocrats who predominate in modern life, and he calls their hell the flatlands, though he takes a considerably kinder view of them than do Eliot, Joyce, Lawrence, or Pound (whose "hell" cantos constitute a vicious attack on usury and other sins).

Another approach to the underworld, however, is to see it as a *temenos*, a sacred place or vessel of initiation. D.H. Lawrence has most fully exploited this dimension of the underworld, in his celebration of the erotic descent into darkness, where the dark gods reanimate life by effecting a reunion of soul and world, spirit and body. For it is through death and rebirth that all of his major characters undergo the initiatory ordeal of transformation that enlivens being by reuniting consciousness with the imaginal energy field of its source. In his sexual scenes, the body itself becomes the *temenos*, infused by the presences of the dark deities of the mysteries. His characters return (ideally) from this abduction into the underworld as resurrected ones, whose flesh emits the roscate glow of *anima mundi*.

Similar notions of the transformative power of the descent to the underworld occur in Eliot and Mann, both of whom associate the *temenos* with the initiatory Grail Chapel of the Arthurian Romance. We see this in section V of *The Waste Land*, which concerns the approach to the perilous Chapel (an "empty chapel" surrounded by "tumbled graves" and "dry bones", i.e., the underworld), and in *The Magic Mountain*, in which Hans Castorp is compared to a knight errant "forever searching for the Grail" and striking a pact "with death and the other world" (727). In both cases, the writers struggle towards the initiatory transformation of recalcitrant protagonists, whose quests are aborted by adverse cultural and personal conditions. A negative aspect of the underworld as a place of transformation occurs in *Heart of Darkness*. Yet even as Kurtz is changed from beacon to demon, Conrad himself emerges from the underworld of the Congo as one of the greatest of the Modernists, as he suffers his own more positive sea-change from sailor to writer. Other examples of *temenoi* in Modernism must include Lowry's cantina the "Farolito" where Geoffrey Firmin is hurled into the underworld, and Virgil's room in the Imperial Palace, where he dies.

In these various procedures of initiatory descent, the literature of

Modernism as a whole goes through dramatic transformations: who could have predicted that the author of *Dubliners* would eventually write *Finnegans Wake*, or that *Buddenbrooks* would lead to *Joseph and His Brothers*? The "I" in Yeats' poems dissolves into the Magus, summoning the dynamic images of the daimones. Joyce's "priest of the eternal imagination transmutes the daily bread of experience into the radiant ever living body of art." The novel itself is then transformed during its protagonists' descents to various underworlds, as we move from the naturalistic autobiographies early in the period, to the later poetic narratives, which use mythic plots to establish underlying fields of metaphoric association. All is "utterly changed", as "a terrible beauty is born" from the depths of the underworld into which the Modernists and their creations descend.⁶

Besides having many chambers, "There are many modes of descent. Many Gods and heroes have chthonic aspects and epithets, so that we may descend through many archetypal styles, not only as does Persephone" (Hillman, *Dream* 49-50). Each version of the descent to and return from the underworld (Persephone, Dionysus, Orpheus, Odysseus, Tiresias, or Hermes) brings with it its own rhetoric, and characteristic set of images, events, tone, and style. The goal of an archetypal poetics is to trace the lineaments of these gods in the works of the period, seeing through the face of things to the soul which animates the world of the text: as Yeats says, every work of art calls a god down among us (qtd. Unterecker 32). It is the purpose of an archetypal poetics to name these gods, and acknowledge their presence in the lives and works of the Modernists.⁷

Notes

¹ Other myths have been proposed as candidates for the myth behind the many myths of the period. John Vickery offers the "displaced quest romance" as explaining "the thematic quests of Eliot for redemption, Joyce for a father, Lawrence for a Golden Age, Yeats for the buried treasure or hidden mystery, and Miss Sitwell for purification" ("The Golden Bough" 187). He also considers the centrality of Persephone and Orpheus in such Modernist poets as Rilke, Lowell, Valery, Muir, Raine, and others (*Myths and Texts* Chapter 6). Rick Tarnas has noted the curious incidence of Promethean motifs in the lives, works, astrological charts, and historical events of several revolutionary periods, including the first quarter of the 20th Century. John Burt Foster has focused on the importance of Dionysus in Nietzsche, Lawrence, Gide, and Mann. Critics who have discussed the theme of the descent to the underworld, without, however, sustained consideration of the details of the myth in relation to the whole of Modernism, include Maud Bodkin (90-153) and Gilbert Highet (510-513).

² For details see my paper "The Decent to the Underworld: Jung and His Brothers" in *C.G. Jung and the Humanities: Towards a Hermeneutics of Culture*,

Ed. D'Acerno and Barnaby, publication forthcoming from Princeton UP.

³ Critics have developed a variety of terms to express this sense of the underworld as a repository of archetypal forms. Karl Kerényi, for example, uses the term "entelechy" to designate a "fundamental gestalt" in the works of Thomas Mann. Rollo May calls the deep structures of the imagination "ground forms, the basic structure of reality, below the strewn surface of the arena" (97). Frederick Karl uses the term "epigenetic principle" in his literary biography of Joseph Conrad to refer to the "ground plan" out of which the parts of living organisms arise (46n.). The Russian Formalists suggest the term "elementary poetic forms" (Steiner 54), similar to Joseph Campbell's use of Adolph Bastian's distinction between elementary ideas and ethnic ideas (*Creative Myth* 653). Martin Heidegger uses the metaphors of root systems and "schemata" for the ground forms of Kant's transcendental imagination (131-177). Finally, James Olney uses the word "rhizome" to refer to the philosophical roots of Yeats's poetry and Jung's psychology. The rhizome is "itself ancient as thought, as deep as psyche From deep, deep down, where it is untouched by the frosts of time, merely strengthened by increase of age, the perennial rhizome still, even in our own day, nourishes its bright, beautiful, brief flowers" (53).

⁴ Bettina Knapp calls this mythogenetic region of soul the *oneirosphere*, a sub or supra stratum of consciousness constantly producing the dreams, images and phantasies which form the elemental basis of cognition, behaviour, and creativity (*Dream* 5). Henri Corbin calls it the *mundus imaginalis*, "a distinct field of imaginal realities requiring methods and perceptual faculties different from the spiritual world beyond it or the empirical world of usual sense perception" (Hillman *Archetypal* 3). Recently, the English biologist Rupert Sheldrake has used the term "morphogenetic field" to designate these invisible systems of energy which underly the physical world and give its development direction and coherence. Sheldrake argues that the fields which determine organic development are derived from past members of the same species (the concept is analogous to Jung's notion of the archetype as formulated by countless repetitions of the behavioural patterns and experiences of previous generations).

⁵ See Stanislov Grof, "Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science" and Wilbur, *The Holonomic Paradigm*, for a thorough discussion of this crucial paradigm shift in modern science, which has been discussed in relation to Modernist literature by N. Katherine Hayles in *The Cosmic Web*.

⁶ I have chosen to limit my discussion to Modernist works which explicitly allude to the underworld, but there are so many (in addition to several which refer implicitly to the *nekyyia*) that a complete analysis of them all is beyond the scope of this work. Consider Joyce's "Hades" and "Circe" chapters in *Ulysses*, the death of Finnegans, or Pound's use of "the Descent to Hades from Homer" as one of the two themes providing unity in his Cantos (qtd. in Yeats: *A Vision* 4; see "Ezra Pound: The Voice from Hades" in Lillian Feder's *Ancient*

Myth and Modern Poetry for a thorough discussion of Pound and the underworld). Chantal Robin argues that "un groupe d'images se forme autour du theme de la descente aux Enfers" in *Le temps retrouvé* (22-34), and the myth surfaces again as informing metaphor in Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer*, and in Ionesco's work, where "entering and traversing a labyrinth, without being lost in its mazes, is tantamount to a *descensus ad infernos*" (Eliade, *Symbolism* 165). In addition, David Richards discusses Herman Hesse's "infernal journey" in *Demian*, "The Difficult Path," and *Steppenwolf* (2, 23, 112) as a descent into the collective unconscious and return to the Great Mother for rebirth. David Blamires discusses the Arthurian journey to the underworld as an image of the trenches during World War I in works by David Jones (176-192).

In addition, David Miller discusses what he calls the "theopoetics" of the descent in theology, mythology, literary criticism, mysticism, and psychology, with brief references to literary work by Charles Williams, Dostoevski, Samuel Beckett, Novalis, Rilke, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Theodore Roethke, Charles Olson, and Robinson Jeffers (165-168). He cites Northrop Frye's remark that "In the twentieth century images of descent are in the ascendent" (qtd. 166), a point echoed in a study of Novalis, Nerval, Mallarme, Rilke, and others by Walter Strauss, who suggests that "the highlighting of *katabasis* [the descent to Hades] differentiates modern from Renaissance Orphism" (269). When one adds the poets discussed by John Vickery in *Myths and Texts* (Chapter 6), the major works I discuss, and minor works like Hans Nossack's *Nekyia*, Herman Kasack's *Die Stadt hinter dem Strom*, Hermann Hesse's "Marchen", Gide's "Persephone", Charles Williams' *Descent into Hell*, or even Murnau's film *Nosferatu* (1922) to the works I discuss to this list, one begins to recognize Frye's remark for the understatement it is. There is, however, no single work which comprehensively examines the myth in Modernism, although there are several devoted to the Middle Ages and Renaissance (notably, Kenneth Patch, D.D.R. Owen, Ronald Terpening, and most recently Carol Zaleski).

⁷ Other critics have personified the archetypes relevant to Modernist writers by using mythic figures associated with the descent to the underworld. Karl Kerényi discusses a "fundamental gestalt" in Thomas Mann's life and work which he personifies in the figure of Hermes (*Mythology* 12). Persephone has been discussed by several critics as important to Lawrence (Ford; Lucente 110f.; Gilbert; Marcus 231; Perloff), Pound (Davenport), H.D. (Friedman; Robinson), and other Modernists (Vickery, *Myths* Chapter 6); Nietzsche began his career with a powerful book focusing on Dionysus (*The Birth of Tragedy*), and ended it signing his letters the dismembered Dionysus (see Foster); Orpheus and was of key significance for Rilke and others (see Walther Strauss), Cocteau (in his film *Orpheus*), and Apollinaire (in his *Bestiary*); Eurydice and Psyche for H.D. (Robinson; Friedman 9); and Tiresias has been identified by Eliot as the most important personage in *The Waste Land* (Smith 99-106); Freud took his motto for his *Traumdeutung* from *The Aeneid* Book VI, hence identifying

with Aeneas and the loss of his father (see Hillman, *Dream* Chapter 1).

Chapter One

Demon and Daimon: Strindberg, Yeats, and Conrad

1.1 Strindberg's Inferno Crisis

Strindberg's transition from the early naturalism of plays like *The Father* (1887) and *Miss Julie* (1888) to the later more mystical *A Dream Play* (1902) and *Ghost Sonata* (1907) passes through an interval of exile, divorce, and remarriage which is known as his Inferno crisis (1894-1898). Most of this time was spent in Paris, where he set forth on a spiritual pilgrimage that would plunge him "to the bottom of the pit--heaven or hell, no matter--to the bottom of the Unknown in order to find the new" (qtd. in Sprinchorn: 64). He called this period the turning point in his life, during which the unknown powers governing his destiny were revealed. 1896 was the year of his greatest metamorphosis, when he "fought with God and fate ... and found the Evil friend" (qtd. in Sprinchorn: 80). The events of this crisis are recorded in the autobiographical work *Inferno* (1896), which Evert Sprinchorn suggests is the first Modernist novel, inaugurating "the whole line of 20th century novels ... which are constructed largely on mythic foundations" (95). As such, *Inferno* illustrates the notion of the underworld as a place of torment, transformation, and revelation of the fundamental ideas governing life and art.

The descent began with a separation from the domestic world of wife and children associated with the mother goddess Demeter: provoked by a letter in which Strindberg confesses a fictitious affair with another woman, his wife requested a divorce. Shortly afterwards, Strindberg was admitted to a hospital for care of the acute psoriasis caused by his alchemical experiments. "Obsessed with the imminence of death", Strindberg bought two white shirts which he saw as shrouds (125). In the Hospital he felt imprisoned and surrounded by "a macabre company ... of dead and dying men", one with a "nose missing, another an eye, yet another had a lip hanging loose, another a rotting cheek" (125). At meals he clinked "glasses with a death's head" and quaffed arsenic at the commands of a nurse who wore "the costume of the dead" (126). With hands "bound and bandaged" confining him to the hospital, he continued his experiments and succeeded in extracting carbon residue from sulphur, a success

in his efforts to prove that sulphur is not a pure element, which his wife rejected as so much hocus-pocus (128). Her incredulity led Strindberg to reject her attempts at reconciliation, after which he felt like a murderer and a suicide at one stroke, wandering through the "dismal district surrounding the hospital" past a canal "black as a grave" which he thinks of drowning in (129).

Like Persephone immediately after her abduction, or like Psyche after her loss of Eros, Strindberg's first experience of the underworld is as a place of death and torture "in a country far from home" (131). Yet from the start there is an accompanying awareness of the *eidola* of Hades, those invisible powers which govern and shape life. Strindberg sensed "the existence of an invisible hand directing the irresistible logic of events" (124), an "invisible hand" exalting him, even as it chastised and humiliated (131). During the long winter of alchemical experiments which kept his hands bleeding and bandaged, he felt "an invisible hand" guiding his steps, with whom he conversed as Socrates did with his "daimon" to receive the support of "unknown powers" (132). Along with this sense of supernatural order and purpose in his torments, Strindberg experienced an "unprecedented expansion of [his] inner senses: a psychic energy that insisted on making itself felt" (145), usually in the form of synchronistic events, dreams, and an acute awareness of myth. His movement into the underworld, then, is accompanied by an intensification of psyche: "Formerly insignificant occurrences now drew my attention" he writes; "my dreams at night assumed the form of omens. I considered myself as having died and gone on to live my life in another sphere" (132-133).

Strindberg's descent also activated an intensified awareness of the ancestral dead as presences directing his metamorphosis in the *temenos* of underworld. Feeling "dead to the world", Strindberg rejected the Right Bank as the "world of the living" and visited the Montparnasse cemetery daily (142). One morning "near the circular path at the center of the cemetery" he saw a medallion of "an aged seer", who proved to be "Orfila, the chemist and toxicologist" who would guide him through many "labyrinths of chemical experiment" towards illumination (136). A week later, he came upon a sign for the Hotel Orfila (136), where, after moving in, he picked up Balzac's book about Swedenborg (*Seraphita*) on the day of Swedenborg's death (164). This synchronicity led to an understanding of the dead Orfila and Swedenborg as presences intervening "in the ups and downs" of his daily life, "encouraging and punishing" him (165), and directing his work through the detailed and numerous chance occurrences which structure his existence in the inferno.

These events catalyzed a transformation in Strindberg's outlook which reflects the alchemical transmutations that engaged his waking energies during this time, when he took up the problem of making gold by working with iron sulphate. The many inexplicable and minutely crafted synchronicities constellated by his work suggested to him a spiritual "reality underlying the play of inert matter and flames" (152) which contrasts sharply with his earlier Naturalism.

He therefore wanted to take science back to a monistic religious perspective, and identified with Orpheus in his efforts "to bring back to life an inanimate nature that had been killed by scientists" (185). As he penetrated to "the very heart and secret of creation" (144), Strindberg wrote that "a sort of religion had been born within me--a state of soul rather than a view based on theories; a disordered chaos of sensations more or less condensed into ideas" (142). In addition, he began to see shapes and patterns in real objects which he had never noticed before (such as a Jupiter head on his pillow, or later (217) the figure of Pan as a Devil in the panelled armoire of a doctor's office) as signifying a "harmony of matter and spirit" (167). Sprinchorn describes Strindberg's new perspective as a "hylozoistic view of the universe as emanating from a unity" with a god operating everywhere as a "principle of simultaneity" (88), a view analogous to the notion of the underworld as a cosmic web of shaping energy fields discussed in the introduction.

But these patterns can also be seen as the plots and paranoiac systems of a "persecution mania" (210), which Strindberg soon suspected himself of suffering from, as the harmonies of nature and spirit yielded to the discordant torments of hell. He imagined that he was being pursued by a Russian who married his former mistress, and this paranoia turned every synchronicity into a "satanic coincidence" (214). Feeling that he was in "hell" being tormented by "demons" (185), Strindberg changed hotels, only to find an "infernal machine" being assembled ("By the Russians, the pietists, the Catholics, the Jesuits, the theosophists?") in the room above him for the purposes of torturing him to death (198). He was thereafter forced to flee to Dieppe by bizarre attacks of electrical seizures which left him looking like "an exhumed corpse" (202). But the torments persisted at night when he felt that "a fluid coursed through my body with all the speed of lightning, asphyxiating me and sucking at my heart" (204), and he imagined "demons at play" (205) assembling a bed for him with springs like "Rumkhoff's induction coils" and posts like "the conductors of a machine for generating electricity" and "an enormous mesh of iron wire" in the loft above his room that looks like a "battery" (208). "Where was the artisan," he wondered, "who was forging the links in these infernal syllogisms?" (210).

These persecutions continued when he moved to his mother-in-law's house on the Danube to live with his little two year old daughter. He was given a lovely rose pink room, but it looked out on the poorhouse and had a lightning rod directly overhead that led him to conclude that the "adepts of the occult [were] persecuting him" for his success in his alchemical work (226). When his relatives provided him with Swedenborg's writings, he immediately realized that "the earth is hell" and that he was one of the damned (228), a suspicion his wife's mother apparently shared. Yet this inferno is still a place of inspiration where the metaphors of poetry are generated: Strindberg felt that he was "sufficiently poor and miserable to extract poetry from the most common and natural incidents" (260). For example, walking in the valley which he

recognized as Swedenborg's hell in every detail (236), he saw six ovens as "an image from Dante's Inferno (229) and a huge great dane blocking his way as Cerberus (230), and before descending a nearby peak "down once more into the valley of sorrows and death, of insomnia and demons", he picked some mistletoe, the Golden Bough that lead Aeneas safely through the underworld (260).

Hence the underworld is also envisioned here as the place where the mythic patterns of the imagination are revealed. Strindberg alternately identifies with "Orpheus, who had his head torn off by the Bacchantes of Thrace" for his misogyny (255), with Prometheus and Phlegyas suffering the torments of the damned (248), with Satan and the rebellious angels, with Jacob wrestling with the Angel (254), with Bhrigu in Germanic mythology, who was "sent to hell ... to witness a thousand horrible sights" (211), with Pan (217), as well as with Aeneas and Odysseus. Indeed, all the "enigmas" and torments of his crisis enabled him to recognize "analogies between his hell and those of Dante and those in Greek, Roman, and Germanic mythologies" (270), so that the descent into Hades is identified as the myth he lived by during this period, shadowing his experience with a sense of "masterly logic and divine ingenuity" (264).

After the "fumes of hell" (262) emanating for Strindberg became too much for his relatives, he returned to Sweden for treatment, and the demons that had been pursuing him gradually began to reveal themselves as the daimones of his creative and spiritual regeneration. His torments were now seen as the devices of disciplinary spirits for the purpose of "the perfection of the human species" (271). "All the empty speculations about imaginary enemies, electrical attacks, and black magicians" were dissipated by his discovery of the Swedenborgian notion of Vastation, a process of purgation whereby one's evils are expelled in order to facilitate spiritual regeneration (267). Hence demon and daimon become one, with the vision of the mahatmas of occultism "as regenerated powers, as corrective spirits (daimons) and instructive spirits (sources of inspiration)" (277). As we will see, this notion of the "powers as one or more concrete, living, individualized beings directing the course of the world and the careers of men" (187) comes very close to the Yeatsian doctrine of the dead as daimones of creative inspiration.

The descent to the underworld, then, catalyzed a crucial transformation in Strindberg's outlook and work, analogous to the transmutations in the alchemical crucible. It is a transformation from the naturalistic perspective of ego to the psychic perspective of soul, expressed by one of Strindberg's friends as "a desire for religion, for a reconciliation with the powers (that was the word), for a rapprochement with the unseen world. The naturalistic era, though strong and productive at one time, has had its day" (266). As Robert Brustein puts it, during Strindberg's Inferno crisis he "lost resistance to the feminine and religious aspects of his nature" and his work underwent "an emphatic change" (339). With the revelation of the unknown powers guiding his destiny,

Strindberg was able to accept "those elements in his nature which he always feared the most and fought the hardest" (341). A reconciliation with the unconscious and feminine spirituality occurred, replacing his former materialism and atheism "with a new concern for the supernal forces behind material things" (341), i.e., with soul.

These changes are evident in the works Strindberg wrote after his *nekyia*, which, as J.L. Styan puts it, become consistently dreamlike, almost surrealist, with a departure from external reality towards musical form, lyrical and incantatory language, and the threatening presence of the unconscious in nightmare form (38). In the dreamworks written after *Inferno*, "Time and space do not exist: on an insignificant groundwork of reality, imagination spins and weaves new patterns" (qtd. in Williams). In a sense, this whole development was announced in *Miss Julie* (1888), which concerns the abduction of a Persephone like Julie into the sensual underworld of exile and suicide represented by her servant Jean. In *A Dream Play* (1902) the myth of the descent to Hades becomes explicit, as the plot traces the descent of Indra's daughter to Foulstrand, "an ugly burned out hell" (Brustein 348), where she assumes the identity of Agnes, who Bettina Knapp calls a "conductor of souls to the afterworld, a psychopomp in the manner of Virgil in Dante" (*Theater* 27).

Strindberg's descent to the underworld, then, becomes an image of poesis and soul-making, as the playwright discovered new forms in "the bottom of the pit", struggled to "convert pathology into drama" (Brustein 350), and sought to reconcile himself with a God who had created such cruel ordeals for a man chosen by the Almighty as "a sign, an example destined for the improvement of others" (*Inferno* 281). In so doing, Strindberg became an inspiration for and prototype of Modernist drama. Along with Ibsen and Chekhov (who Thomas Mann notes also endured a "descent into hell" which contributed to his transformation as a dramatist (*Last Essays* 179)), Strindberg presides over the creation of Modernism in the theatre, for which the *nekyia* is a founding myth.¹

1.2 Yeats and the "Cocks of Hades"

A close look at three poems by Yeats will serve here to clarify the methodology of an archetypal poetics of Modernism, since his work reflects the general pattern of Modernist development outlined in the introduction. This can be illustrated through a reading of poems like "The Second Coming," "Sailing to Byzantium," and "Byzantium," and through a discussion of the myth of the descent to the underworld in his work. Support for this approach comes from James Olney, who identifies the paradigm of a typical Yeats poem as a movement "from ego to *cidos*" (279), and from Robert Langbaum, who "explains the movement of the great meditative poems" as an "escape from self-consciousness through the miraculous transition from the individual to the archetypal" (188-189). It is this basic transition, which Hillman formulates as

the movement out of life and into soul, that I will focus on here, considering it as paradigmatic of the lives, works, and cultural history of Modernism.

To begin with, *A Vision* is literally a "book of the dead" (its third chapter dealing with the soul "between death and birth" (223)), showing how the descent to the underworld precipitates a revelation of the archetypal structures which govern the lives of individuals and nations, the growth of works of art, and the shape of an historical period. The circumstances of its composition illustrate the relationship between collapse and revelation: Yeats in desperation proposed to George Hyde-Lees, after being rejected by both Maud Gonne and her daughter after the death of John MacBride in the Easter Rising of 1916. Death and personal and historical crisis became the basis of revelation, as Mrs. Yeats began her communications with the dead on the fourth day of her marriage (after three dark nights in what must have been a nightmare of the soul, with a desperate man riddled by remorse at having married the wrong woman). Thereafter, Yeats has "mummy truths to tell," in poems whose function it is to abduct us as readers into the realm of the dead (Olney 249-250).

This descent to the underworld, precipitated by a crisis which illustrates Anthony Libby's linkage of doom and revelation (1), and Hillman's insistence on pathology as inherent to soul (*Re-Visioning* Chapter 2), became the basic movement of Yeats' poems, and the underlying impulse of his aesthetic. His notion that "A writer must die every day he lives, be reborn, as it is said in the Burial Service, an incorruptible self" (qtd. in Olney: 120) follows Hillman's outline of the transition from ego to the archetypal imagery of soul. Yeats reiterates this idea in "A General Introduction for my Work" when he says the poet is "never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been reborn as an idea, something intended, complete part of his own phantasmagoria" (qtd. in Langbaum: 246). Here again, we move from what Eliot called anarchy and futility ("a bundle of accident and incoherence") to the shape and significance (a complete idea) provided by the use of myth in art. It is a movement from the "flesh and blood creature to the mythical person" which concerned Yeats throughout his career (Langbaum 220).

As noted above, James Olney has formulated this movement "from ego to eidos" as the "typical psychological and philosophical progress of Yeats's poems" (278-279). In language very close to that used by Hillman in his discussion of the descent to the underworld, Olney writes that the "paradigm of the Yeatsian poetic process" (286) is "a mode that transforms the personal and egoistic into the impersonal, mythic, and eidotic" (278). Evidence for this assertion is derived from the fact that "sixty-one poems in *The Collected Poems* begin with the word 'I', and that 'in another forty-one poems the same pronoun occurs in the first line' (277-278). The poems then move into the "general pattern of myth and symbol" into which Yeats said many personal emotions were woven in his poems. This is precisely the transition Hillman charts in

following Persephone into the underworld, where the ideational forms that shape and govern life (the *eidola* of Hades) are revealed.

Similarly, Yeats identifies the images that come to him in poetic and occult trance as "souls of the illustrious dead", the daimons who construct the myths informing our lives and unify being (Langbaum 170). These are the powers that "shape our characters and our lives"; the Daimons who "move through the Great Year" in *A Vision* as the stage managers of history (Langbaum 193); the fundamental pattern informing each poem, which Olney calls its *eidos* (264); and the sets of archetypal constellations or "dominant images" (Unterecker 37) which "weave all into a vast design" (*A Vision*, qtd. in Unterecker: 172). All, as Yeats says, are "unified by an image, or bundle of images" (qtd. in Unterecker: 18). These are the informing structures revealed through the descent to the underworld, involving a transition from ego to soul, individual to archetype, or ego to eidos. Yeats, like Hillman, associates this passage with a crisis in the personal life, which severs ego from attachments to life in order to reveal the activities of soul: "through the dramatic power" of the "personifying spirits" Yeats calls the Daimons, "our souls are brought to crisis" and all is turned "to Mask and Image" as we become "phantoms" in our own eyes (*Per Amica* qtd. in Langbaum: 190), i.e., shades wandering through the underworld of the imaginal.

This development of the concept of the daimons as agents of the soul who reveal archetypal structures through the symbolic imagery of *Spiritus Mundi* clearly anticipates Hillman's archetypal psychology. For poet and psychologist, revelation and recovery of the imaginal occurs through crisis, collapse, dream, trance, and creative acts (like sex and poetry). For both, a kind of ego death, or personal sacrifice is prerequisite to the revelation and recovery of soul. As Olney writes, "the artist sacrifices his personal being to recreate himself in the image of an ideal paradigm, his own form disappearing in the larger form of an archetype, an *eidos*" (209).

In addition, Yeats comes very close to Rupert Sheldrake, whose hypothesis of formative causation provides a scientific parallel to the notion of the daimon. As the non-physical energy field governing the development of the individual life, the historical period, and the work of art, the daimon is analogous to what Sheldrake calls the "morphogenetic field" in biology. These are energy patterns derived from the past members of the species whose resonance directs the development of organic forms. Yeats comes very close to this idea when he compares the unifying structures revealed in *A Vision* to living organisms: each "plant or animal," he writes, "has an order of development peculiar to it," and "all living mind" participates in the same underlying form, "however adapted in plant, animal, or man to particular circumstance" (*The Poems* 647). Like Sheldrake, Yeats argues that these fundamental patterns of energy which shape development are derived from the illustrious dead of the race, and from the souls of one's ancestry: "the dead living in their memories are, I am

persuaded, the source of all we call instinct" ("Anima Mundi" qtd. in Langbaum: 173). Each individual has a daimon proper and unique to himself (Olney 191), just as nations, races, and historical eras are governed by the activities of "a bundle of images" (*A Vision* qtd. in Unterecker: 18) or "stream of souls" (*A Vision* qtd. in Langbaum: 150) that run together to form the identity of the individual and of the age. Sheldrake calls these energy patterns, derived from past members of the species, the "morphogenetic field," which Yeats imagines as "the Great Memory passing on from generation to generation" (*The Poems* 649).

These ideas can be concretely illustrated through readings of "The Second Coming" and the Byzantium poems, in which the revelation of the informing image follows collapse and descent to the underworld. In the first poem, for example, "things fall apart" in the first stanza as "mere anarchy is loosed upon the world," and a "blood-dimmed tide" drowns "the ceremony of innocence." This collapse is analogous to the abduction of the innocent Persephone, and, as in Lawrence, it is conflated with the imagery of the flood. This eruption of the underworld in the first stanza leads immediately to a revelation of the imaginal, as "a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi" emerges in the second stanza. The pattern is exactly that noted by Hillman, where Persephone's abduction precipitates the manifestation of the *eidola* of the archetypal psyche: doom leads in both cases to the revelation the "ideational forms that shape and govern life" (Hillman, *Dream* 51).

Similarly, the Byzantium poems follow a movement through death, sleep, and art towards a manifestation of the archetypal forms of the imaginal underworld. The "plot" of each poem is literally a descent to the underworld, a movement out of life and into soul, a transition from a heroic naturalism to mythopoesis. Unterecker describes this as leaving the "flesh and blood world behind" (217) towards a revelation of the "elemental symbols of earth, air, fire, and water" (173). In "Sailing to Byzantium," we begin with a natural, happy innocence at play in the fields of Demeter: "the young / In one another's arms, birds in the trees" and "The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas" of summer. The poem then moves through age beyond the "dying generations" towards "the holy city" of the soul, Byzantium. Death, sleep, dream, and song leads again to a revelation of the sacred images of God and art: as the poet crosses the seas to the afterlife, he is alchemically transmuted from mortal "Fish, flesh, or fowl" to a golden bird "set upon a golden bough to sing" to amuse a "drowsy Emperor." With death and sleep (the collapse of the ruling powers of ego-consciousness) we move "out of nature" into imaginal soul, following Persephone into the underworld.

The same complex imagery unites the collapse of the heroic waking world with sleep, dream, and death in "Byzantium." In this later poem, written after an attack of Malta fever (Unterecker 217), sleep removes the "Emperor's drunken soldiery" and the "unpurged images of day recede" so that the *eidola*

of the underworld may be revealed. In the second and third stanzas, Hermes (the guide of souls to the underworld) appears: first as "an image, man or shade, / Shade" who unwinds "Hades' bobbin bound in mummy cloth"; and secondly as one of "the cocks of Hades" (which Gordon and Fletcher (137) identify as the birds of Hermes), described as "golden handiwork ... Planted on the starlit golden bough". Like Thomas Mann, Yeats here associates death, dream, alchemical transformation, and aesthetic power with Hermes: collapse of the phenomenal (upheld by the Emperor's soldiery) leads to revelation of the imaginal (upheld by "the golden smithies of the Emperor"). This movement out of nature into soul is again imaged as a passage across the sea, as the dolphins carry the spirits into the underworld.

As Gordon and Fletcher (137) have noted, these poems conflate Classical, Byzantine, and occult themes. Yeats forged from these ruins a coherent mythography of the soul's journey into the underworld. As we will see in the following chapters, other Modernists also unify competing discourses of mythic imageries (Biblical, Classical, and alchemical) by focusing on the theme of death and the recovery of the imaginal. The emphasis in these essays is less on the ontological nature of this bricolage, than on its aesthetic tenor: the descent to the underworld is the basic structure of the imagination, the dynamics of which are projected into poem and novel. In both, poet and novelist, character and reader, follow Persephone from rape to revelation, and marriage with soul.

1.3 Joseph Conrad's "Taste of Hell"

While Yeats is primarily concerned with the underworld as the repository of the fundamental forms of the poetic imagination (underworld as granary), Conrad's use of the myth focuses on its demonic horror (underworld as inferno). It was in a climate of historical, intellectual, and personal crisis that Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*, "one of the earliest and greatest works in the tradition of modern literature" (Watt 135). This crisis involved reports returning to Europe of the horrors perpetrated in the African interior in the name of Victorian progress, and coincided with the "general ideological crisis of the end of the Nineteenth Century" (Watt 162). This "astrophysical pessimism" was produced by a new cosmology that completed the diminution of man's place in the universe begun by Galileo, and by the depressing impact of evolutionary theory, which precipitated an increasing malaise in regard to the progressive ideals of Victorian society (Watt 157-161). As Watt writes, "*Heart of Darkness* was but one of many late Nineteenth Century works which ... implied the coming destruction of existing civilization" (161).

This imminent collapse of the heroic ideals of civilization affected Conrad directly, as it coincided with his own mental breakdown preceding the composition of *Heart of Darkness* (1897-1898). "The midlife crisis," Watt writes, was "particularly acute for Conrad": his last close Polish relative had died, he

had recently had a son born, and his psychological and financial circumstances were "desperate" (129). Frederick Karl's chapter on this period of Conrad's life is called "Into the Mouth of Hell" (Chapter 19), and Conrad himself experienced his passage "over the rise of 40 to travel downwards" as "a taste of hell" (qtd. in Watt: 129). During these "doldrums," Conrad felt suicidal, all belief in himself destroyed by the "horror" of "nerve-trouble" and mental illness (Watt 130). Watt argues that this personal descent into hell established the "essential pattern of the rest of his writing career painfully slow progress in writing, punctuated by occasional periods of intense productivity but more often by bouts of disabling physical illness or psychological prostration" (126). Karl explicitly sees Conrad's descent "into his own kind of darkness" in relation to the emerging powers of his creative imagination, which carried him "down not only into memory but into the very chaos and extravagance of the unconscious Stalled, depressed, ill, he had touched bottom and had, in his own way, found his subject matter" (441).

That "his subjects were themselves archetypal images that extended deep into the recesses of mankind itself, denoting riches, power, sexual potency, failure, and achievement" (441), shows that the descent to the underworld, through personal and historical collapse, leads to the revelation of the informing structures of the imagination, which give shape and significance to individual lives, historical periods, and individual works of art (here we move through the underworld as inferno to the underworld as granary). The linkage of "riches, power, sexual potency" with the failure that leads to achievement echoes Persephone's abduction by Hades, who Hillman describes as a lord of invisible riches (*Dream* 28). Karl calls this archetypal pattern informing Conrad's work an Orphic-Faustian "underground journey" (466).

It is significant that the work produced under these general and personal conditions of collapse is one which many critics have related to the descent to the underworld.² It is the myth informing the imaginal structure of *Heart of Darkness*. In fact, the *nekylia* represents the dynamic of *poesis* as Conrad experienced it. Karl follows a similar line of reasoning when he argues that *Heart of Darkness* reflects "the imaginative process" itself, which "may be like dreams" (445). This process, he points out, is, in Conrad, predicated upon the deaths, drownings, attempted suicides, and various forms of paralysis and immobility which characterize his fiction. These are all aspects of the descent to and return from the underworld, a metaphor for the process by which the ego is deconstructed so the powers of the imagination may reveal themselves. As Karl notes,

the pattern of his imagination appears to be based on dramatic acts of dying or seeking death, and the long periods of passivity which occur in his work are attached to the peculiar thrust of his imagination. Narrative devices constantly retard or still the story line his focus upon drowning, near death, suicide, or dying and

becoming reborn through a narrator--these are clearly, all of them, acts of imagination, part of the very thought and creative processes which account for Conrad in the 1899-1904 period. (463)

It is through this process of death as an individual and rebirth as a narrator that the novelist enters his own phantasmagoria, that he is taken out of life and into soul. Conrad himself seems to have experienced this as a descent to the Kimmerian shades of darkness and imaginal memory: "One's will," he wrote while composing the story, "becomes the slave of hallucinations, responds only to shadowy impulses, waits on imagination alone" (qtd. in Karl: 456). Hence the various instances of futility and impotence in *Heart of Darkness* can be understood as reflecting the process whereby ego dissolves into the creative depths of memory and the imaginal. The many motifs of retardation that afflict the narrative progress of this and other works of the period, therefore, reveal Conrad himself as the subject matter: the shipwrecks in "Youth", "The Nigger of the Narcissus", and *Lord Jim*, and the repeated instances of retardation in *Heart of Darkness* illustrate the creative crippling of ego which catalyzes the descent to the underworld. This suggests that the Congo was a kind of demonic temenos, a place where Conrad was transformed "from a sailor to a writer" (Garnett).

Heart of Darkness begins, in fact, with an image of arrested movement, as the flood tide makes it impossible for the *Nellie* to return up the Thames and Marlow begins his story to pass the time. Immobility literally brings the story into existence, a paralysis reflected in Marlow's tale at many points: boilers and trucks lie in the grass around the Company Station like carcasses of prehistoric beasts (16); Marlow finds his steamer on the bottom of the river at the Central Station, and must wait months for rivets (21); the donkeys of the Eldorado Expedition die (34); the march into the interior is impeded by blacks dying in harness (20) and a white man who continually faints on hot stretches (21); the trip up the river is imperilled by snags, heavy fog, and an attack in which the pilot is killed; the boat itself is called a "cripple" (54) that is "expected to give up every moment" (39); and when we first see Kurtz he is immobilized on a stretcher, and he dies (as Marlow nearly does as well) on the way downriver after the boat breaks down.

Karl interprets these motifs of retardation as being "part of the imaginative process" (460), whereby the Promethean ego of the man of action (Conrad as sailor adventurer) is killed, so that the Orphic powers of the mythic imagination may be activated (Conrad as writer). Hillman's discussion of the motifs of retardation and crippling, which he sees as aspects of the "deformative activity of the the imagination" (*Dream* 128), parallels this view. Conrad's transformation from sailor to writer during this period, therefore, shows that the descent to the underworld cripples the heroic will in order to reveal the poetic basis of consciousness.

In addition to the motifs of immobility and passivity, *Heart of Darkness* is permeated with images of death and illness, and alludes frequently to the mythic geography of the underworld. Furthermore, it links these themes with storytelling and the power of dreams. Of the dream motifs which Hillman discusses as orienting psyche towards death and the soul, several are relevant to *Heart of Darkness*, such as blackness, shadows, retardation, mud, bodies of water, revelry, doors and gates, and sickness (*Dream* 142-203). The allusion organizes many details of the story's language and imagery, with its repeated usage of the metaphorical images of death, devils, phantoms, shadows, dreams, and the soul.

To begin with death: the Company office in Brussels, a "sepulchral city" (72), is like a "house in the city of the dead" (11). It is surrounded by a "dead silence" (10), and its inner entrance is a "door of Darkness" guarded by two fates (11). Later, the Intended's house will be seen similarly: it is on an alley like "a cemetery" (74), and it has a "piano like a sarcophagus" inside (75), along with the ghostly spirit of its inhabitant. On the trip along the African coast, Marlow observes "the merry dance of death and trade" under a sky like an "overheated catacomb" (14). The rivers flowing out from the interior are underworldly, stygian "streams of death in life" (14). Arriving at the Company Station, he sees the "deathlike indifference of unhappy savages" (16) who are dying from starvation and disease in a "grove of death" (20). The blacks die in harness on the way to the Central Station, which is also seen as "a grove of death" (28) surrounded by a "spectral forest" (26), its atmosphere permeated by "lurking death ... hidden evil, profound darkness" (33). Marlow's pilot is killed on the trip up river to retrieve the "disinterred body of Mr. Kurtz" (49) from the grave to which it shortly returns; Kurtz is an "animated image of death" (60), and Marlow, nearly buried as well, is "numbered with the dead" by the Company officers (69).

This realm of the dead is inhabited, appropriately, by "devils", "phantoms", "shadows", and "shades". The Europeans are possessed by the "weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly" (17). The "flabby devil" (21) who runs the Central Station is a "papier-mache Mephistopheles" unafraid of God or devil (26). Kurtz is sent a "poor devil" by the Company, whom he soon sends back (32). The boiler of Marlow's steamer "seemed to have a sulky devil in it" (38), and his cannibalistic passengers bring "the devilry of lingering starvation" (42) to his mind. Later, after the attack, he throws his bloody shoe to "the devil-god of that river" (48). Kurtz undergoes (or so Marlow imagines) a "devilish initiation" (49), and as a result takes his "high seat among the devils of that Land" (50). A "diabolic love and unearthly hate" fights for possession of his soul (69), and a "satanic litany" accompanies his midnight ceremonies (68).

These devils inhabit the "gloomy circle of some Inferno" (17) in which all hope is lost. When the steamer arrives at the Inner Circle, the desperate

savages send up a "wail of mournful fear and utter despair as may be imagined to follow the light of the last hope from the earth" (47), and when Marlow sees the harlequin youth on the shore, the sky looks "hopless and dark" (56). Kurtz is afflicted by an "intense and hopeless despair" while dying (71), and Marlow's near death experience is described as a "passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire" (72). On several occasions, in fact, Marlow identifies himself as a member of the community of the dead: he says "it seemed to me as if I also were buried in a vast grave full of unspeakable secrets" (63), and "I was, so to speak, numbered with the dead ... in the tenebrous land invaded by these mean and greedy phantoms" (69). Furthermore, Marlow's literal descent towards the grave catalyzes a sense of imminent revelation, leading him to muse that "perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible" (72).

Marlow's near death experience parallels the Buddhist visions of the Bardo, the intermediary underworld between life and death. Marlow passes through this realm "without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat" (71); in his severe illness, he transcends "the strange commingling of desire and hate" (72). His near death experience, when he says "they very nearly buried me" (71), is a "passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire" (72). These details substantiate Conrad's sense of Marlow as "a meditating Buddha" (79), for the great temptations of the Buddha beneath the Bodhi Tree of Enlightenment were exactly fear and desire, and these temptations are rehearsed at the moment of death in the visions of the wrathful and benign deities described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead (Trungpa 24-29). Marlow passes between these opposites, and achieves a very Buddhist "contempt for the evanescence of all things" (72).

Perhaps, at the moment of death, all mysteries will be resolved. In Plutarch, "the experience of death is compared with initiation into great mysteries" (Meyer 8). The word "mystery" occurs in various forms at least 12 times in the text. It can denote the riddling enigma of life, refer to the conspiracy against Kurtz, or suggest a broad range of meanings associated with the notion of ritual or secret ceremony. In this last sense, the word suggests the Classical Mysteries of the Hellenistic world, which, as in the case of the rites of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, re-enacted the descent into the underworld. In fact, Conrad first uses the word while imagining a Roman soldier on the Thames "closed round" by the "mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He must live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable" (6). What "mysteries" and what "initiation" did Conrad have in mind? Perhaps those associated with Mithras, so popular amongst the Roman soldiers.

Lillian Feder pointed out the Classical "imagery and symbolism of the

traditional voyage into Hades" initiated in the story by the fates weaving black wool in the company office in Brussels. She did not, however, comment on the Classical mystery rites based on this voyage. Nor did she notice that when entering Hades in Africa, Marlow must offer the traditional sop to Cerberus, here a "good Swede's ship's biscuit" given to one of the "black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom" of the Company Station halfway up the Congo (18). These shadows are the refuse of imperialism seen as the shadowy images of the dead, the phantoms which Hillman (*Dream* 51f.) identifies as the creative personages of the dream. Marlow wanders among the gibbering ghosts of nightmare throughout the story. Like Conrad himself, (who, remember, had complained of having his will enslaved by hallucinations while writing this story) he is bitter at being "at the mercy of some atrocious phantom" (36), who is later referred to as an "initiated wraith from the back of Nowhere" (50). The slaves of the Company Station (36), Marlow and his passengers (36), and the Europeans grubbing for ivory (69) are all referred to as "phantoms". "Shadow" is another term repeated in the narrative to describe the inhabitants of the underworld: the savages surrounding Kurtz's hut are shadows (62); all the dead living in Marlow's memory are shadows (74); and the Intended herself is an "eloquent phantom...a tragic and familiar Shade" (78). Kurtz is described as "that Shadow" (67) whom Marlow meets at midnight on the jungle path, the "shadow" who "looked satiated and calm, as though for the moment it had had its fill of all the emotions" (61), and the dying man "haunted by shadowy images" on the steamer (69).

To this variegated imagery of the descent to the underworld (the realm of the dead, shadows, shades, images, devils, and phantoms) Conrad adds the connection of dreams and the "soul" (a word occurring many times in the narrative). Like Hillman, he associates the dream with the underworld: Marlow's journey, inaugurated by the woman weaving black wool who walks towards him like a somnambulist (10), is a "pilgrimage among hints of nightmare" (14); the entire narration is like a dream he is trying to tell his listeners (27); he remarks that a "dream sensation pervaded all his days" in the Congo (42); the skulls surrounding the hut of the Inner Station are "smiling at some endless and jocose dream" (58); Marlow must make his famous "choice of nightmares" (63,69) and "dream the nightmare to the end" (71); and his conversation with Kurtz on the jungle path at midnight has "the terrific suggestiveness of words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares. Soul! If anybody ever struggled with a soul, I am the man" (67).

This last citation links the notion of soul, the dream, and the underworld, with the creative power of the imagination (underworld as granary). It is this aesthetic aspect of the myth emphasized here, in contrast to the moral and social perspectives applied by Feder, Evans, and Watt. From this perspective, *nekyia* = *poesis*. When Marlow returns to Europe, it is not his "physical strength that wanted nursing," it is his "imagination that wanted soothing" (73). For it

is the imagination, the soul "captured by the incredible" (27) that needs therapy. Just as in the story "swift shadows darted out on the earth, gathering the steamer in a shadowy embrace" (62), so Persephone is gathered into the arms of the lord of the underworld, and so Conrad's became "the slave of hallucinations" while writing the novella (qtd. in Karl: 456). His experience in writing the story is essentially the same as Marlow's, who feels captured by the incredible and under the spell of a dream (27-28). And so too are we the readers captivated by the spell of Marlow's tale, spoken by a shade wrapped in darkness, seeming to have no human features, to a deck crowded with the dead, drifting with the tides of the Thames on a ship of death.

Marlow, then, like Orpheus, brings back with him a symbolic image, but not the person in the flesh whom he had meant to retrieve. His tale links the two worlds of Europe and Africa, of the conscious pretensions of waking life and the dynamic verities of the unconscious. Also like Orpheus, whose severed head goes singing downriver, his tale is told floating on the Thames, and combines the devotion to the restraints of form and the imperatives of the dream (Apollonian qualities, according to Nietzsche) with the terrific delight of Dionysian lyricism. At the nadir of his descent, Marlow encounters a powerful Queen of the Underworld, a Persephone who personifies the "tenebrous and passionate soul" (62) of the jungle, and the Hades (Kurtz) whom she has abducted (Conrad reverses the traditional relationship, as we will see Lawrence does as well). In addition, when he returns, he meets an avatar of Persephone in her inscrutable innocence (Kurtz's Intended).

Conrad, attending to the tale Marlow tells him, follows the movements of the imaginal. As ego dissolves into soul, the mythic terrain of the underworld is reconstructed according to a modernist cartography: as an inferno, it is the dark shadow of European Imperialism, and the unrestrained threat of the Freudian id (the "forgotten and brutal instincts" (67) roused in Kurtz by the jungle); as granary, it is the measureless domain of the collective unconscious ("the mind of man [which] is capable of anything -- because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future" (37)); and as *temenos*, it is the place where Kurtz undergoes his demonic transformation, as well as the place where Conrad's "sea change" from sailor to writer occurs. There in his inner jungle live the imaginal energies of soul, with which Conrad, like his dream-ego Marlow, wrestles to the end. For Conrad, as for Strindberg and Yeats, demon and daimon become one.

Notes

¹ A partial list of plays dealing with the descent to the underworld would include Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus*, Andre Gide's *Persephone*, and Tennessee Williams' *Orpheus Descending*, Ionesco's *Journeys Among the Dead*, and other

works in which the underworld is a central metaphor, like Bertolt Brecht's *Baal*, Ionesco's *Exit the King*, and Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Many of these works are discussed by Hugh Dickinson in his *Myth on the Modern Stage*.

² Lillian Fedor traced the analogies in *Heart of Darkness* to Virgil's *Aeneid*; Robert Evans outlined "the close parallel structure between *Heart of Darkness* and the *Inferno*"; and Gustav Morf noted that Marlow "undergoes a process of individuation, a descent into hell, a night journey into the unconscious" during which the shades of Conrad's Polish past are summoned (203). Ian Watt also acknowledges the relevance of the myth to the work, but argues that "a multiplicity of historical and literary associations pervades" the work, and therefore that no "single cryptographic system" can account for "the main symbolic meaning of the work as a whole" (161-162).

Chapter Two

T.S. Eliot: Pattern and Purgatory

2.1 *The Waste Land*: Hell Traversed

The characteristic tension in Eliot's poetry, as indicated in his review of *Ulysses*, is between the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" and the "shape and significance" provided by the mythic method. For Eliot, the revelation of these mythic patterns of order required that movement out of life and into soul that Hillman calls the soul-making journey into the underworld. Although this discovery of the informing structures of the imaginal spirit ultimately involved the motif of the descending dove (in *Four Quartets*), this mystical suspension of the chaotic concerns of waking life was preceded by the descent into hell, which Bernard Dick has seen as the clue to the use of myth in *The Waste Land*: "if the poem is regarded as a descent to the underworld," Dick writes, "many of its problems ... can be resolved as conventions of the *descensus*" (71).

In addition, recent biographies and earlier critical studies have indicated the relevance of the myth of the underworld to Eliot's crises, which coincided with the collective collapse of Europe during two world wars which Eliot saw as confirmation of his perception of modern life as a moral inferno.¹ This chapter, therefore, will focus on the myth of the underworld as the informing pattern of Eliot's life and work which Elizabeth Drew calls "the archetype of transformation". As we will see, these conceptions of the underworld as inferno and *temenos* complement Eliot's complex relation to the voices of the past (underworld as crypt) and his sophisticated use of myth to give shape and significance to his material (underworld as granary).

Eliot's decision to become a poet was resolved by his trip to Europe in 1914, a movement away from the concerns of American life and the security of an academic career. After the war came, he settled in a London described by D.H. Lawrence as "a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors" (qtd. in Gordon: 81). During this period Eliot endured his father's disappointment at his son's choice of career, the painfully disorienting status

of exile, a rather miserable school teaching job, and what quickly became a disastrous marriage (Gordon 85). By the end of the war, his transformation from academic to poet was complete, a sea change which coincided with his marriage to Vivien, whom Gordon compares to a Sybil "who had directed Aeneas to the Underworld" (98). Just as Conrad's descent to the Congo catalyzed his transformation from sailor to writer, so Eliot's hellish experience in London and tormented relationship with Vivien seems to have completed his transition from American academic to English poet.

Vivien was also familiar with hell: in September 1915, after her marriage, Vivien fell ill and nearly died, setting the "pattern of the rest of her life: a pattern of illness, crisis, convalescence, and relapse" (Gordon 77). The rhythm typifies the Persephone complex: nervous and physical collapse, unmanageable moods and hysteria, and an imagination inflamed by drugs and tormented by hallucinations (the shades of the underworld). Eliot, in turn, played the part of Hades as well as Aeneas: Vivien felt her spirits "often dampened" when he returned from work (Gordon 78), interrupting the exhilaration in natural surroundings she discovered when left alone (the innocent Persephone at play in the fields of Demeter before the abduction).

Soon committed to the underworld of hospitals and asylums, Vivien became "a phantom of pain and reproach" kept out of sight when Eliot's mother visited in 1921. Gordon notes that "Eliot's friends remembered a chic and literate woman who became, through illness too hysterical and bothersome to be endured" (79). Just how much responsibility Eliot bore for this transformation can never be known. I believe, however, that one can see him both as the abducting Hades carrying Persephone into hell, and also as the victim of the fluctuating delusions (and perhaps accurate accusations) of the hag queen he, at least partially, helped to create. Valerie Eliot notes that Eliot himself saw his relationship to Vivien in terms of the underworld, comparing it to Dante's Paola and Francesca who suffered the hellish torments of desires they couldn't gratify (Gordon 74).

These ghastly years of marriage and war formed the experiences that led to the writing of *The Waste Land*. Eliot called his marriage "the most awful nightmare of anxiety that the mind of man could conceive", during which he had "lived through material for a score of long poems" (qtd. in Gordon: 75, 95). And when we look at the fragments composed during this period, preserved in the facsimile edition of *The Waste Land*, we find many motifs relevant to the descent to the underworld: one has a man standing beside an "Acheron like river with the suggestion of an inferno or purgatory yet to be crossed on the other side" (Gordon 88); others have an upside down man (which Hillman discusses as an underworld motif (*Dream* 178-180)), a man swimming to the bottom of the sea, and a dream vision of a man a long time dead, from a Poe story about "the collective presence of all the dead" in which the man says "I who write shall have long since gone my way into the region of shadows"

(cited Smith 125); yet another has a "Poe-like bride seeking her husband beyond death: a complex of victim and demon" similar to Vivien (Gordon 88-97).

These years of crisis and collapse gradually escalated towards Eliot's "full-scale breakdown" (Bush 68) in 1921, during which he "heard 'What the Thunder Said'" and completed *The Waste Land* (Gordon 87). His father died in 1919, before a reconciliation was possible, and Vivien records Eliot's reaction as having been "most terrible" (qtd. in Bush: 55). Vivien's own father fell ill in 1920, and she herself was in bed by the spring of 1921, suffering a breakdown which left Eliot exhausted and unable to work. Finally, in the autumn of 1921, after a visit from his mother and sister, Eliot himself collapsed, and entered institutions at Margate and then Lausanne, where *The Waste Land* was written (Gordon 105). During this period and after, Eliot was described as a man "constantly on the verge of breakdown" (Gordon 123). His troubles were intensified by the huge doctor's bills for Vivien (facts reminiscent of Mann and Conrad, who both suffered illnesses in the family and large debts when writing books dealing with the descent to the underworld).

These conditions inform the emergence of a poem which is suffused with allusions to the underworld, most explicitly acknowledged by the epigraph of the Cumaeen Sybil, the title of the section which begins the poem ("The Burial of the Dead"), and by the echoes of Dante in the description of the crowd flowing over London Bridge as souls in limbo.² The descent precipitates the revelation of the archetypes which structure the poem, so that in addition to the infernal aspects of the underworld, a sense of its power as the repository of the many mythic allusions in the poem (underworld as granary) must be added. As with other major modernist works, therefore, the personal *nekyia* is associated with *poesis*. "Prufrock" also begins with a pathologized image, the patient under ether on the operating table, when the journey into night begins. Ego functions have been paralyzed by sexual failure and the fear of death. This breakdown opens psyche to its unconscious depths, activates the voices of the dead (the poets of the tradition, whose voices echo in the ancestral vaults), and necessitates the "exorcism of the demon" through writing that Eliot associates with lyric poetry (qtd. in Bush: 56). This crippling of the protagonist in "Prufrock" spreads to include several voices in the later poem, in which many voices begin to be heard. In Hillman's terms, the rape of ego through illness and breakdown has led to the revelation of those mythic archetypes of the underworld which give the poem shape and significance.

This intimate relationship between personal collapse and the journey through Hades, as it emerges in the allusive substructure of the poetry, leads Ronald Bush to ask whether "*The Waste Land* was made possible by a disruption in Eliot's conscious life and a breakdown of his psychological defences?" (68). He gathers evidence for this linkage of pathology and the revelation of the imaginal in Eliot's aesthetic theory. In *The Uses of Poetry and Criticism*, for example, the poet writes that "some form of ill-health, debility or anemia

may ... produce an efflux of poetry" (qtd. in Bush: 68), and he describes inspiration as a "breaking down of strong habitual barriers" during which "some obstruction is momentarily whisked away" (qtd. in Bush: 68). In his essay on Dostoevsky, Eliot argues that an illness can be "the entrance to a genuine and personal universe" (qtd. in Bush: 71).

Other allusions in *The Waste Land* that reflect this passage through death and illness to the imaginal include those to Philomela and to Ariel's song from *The Tempest*. Both deal with the transformation of nature into image, which is the essence of art, and of the alchemical journey of soul making as well. In fact, the myth of Philomela, raped by the King and transformed into a nightingale filling the desert with song, parallels the rape of Persephone and her descent into the realm of invisible riches, where all has suffered a sea-change into the imaginal. Furthermore, Eliot's note referring to the Edenic quality of the scene leads us to associate the barbarous king with the Christian Hades, Satan (which Milton does too). Is this then a guarded confession on Eliot's part, referring to some sexual remorse in his relations with Vivien, and his compulsive need to exorcize the demon of his guilt through poetry?

Support for this point of view comes from Grover Smith, who argues that "the violation of woman is the main theme of 'A Game of Chess' [working] on a mythic and possibly a personal scale" (128), and from Bush and Gordon, who suggest that Eliot's severe guilt emerges in the disguised imagery of buried corpses and sexual abuse in *The Waste Land*. This may well indicate the same connection between metaphorical rape and the revelation of the poetic basis of consciousness that Hillman suggests in his treatment of Persephone. But the use of Ariel's song, though reflecting the same transition through death into poetry, suggests rather the son's lament for the death of the father as the guilty corpse from which the body of the poem sprouts. At any rate, the ghosts here are indeed both familial and complex, mixing the memory of innocence destroyed by sexual violation, and the desire for redemption and reconciliation with the father. These buried emotions emerge to abduct the poet into his own private underworld, where they are transformed into *The Waste Land*.

Bush uses the metaphor of the nightmare to develop his notion of the way these buried emotions inform the structure of the poem from below. He argues that the theme of the violation and/or murder of women (the hyacinth girl, Ophelia, and Philomela, who Smith argues Eliot took from a Middleton play in which the husband is an accomplice in the degradation of his wife (123)) provides "an undercurrent to the poem, dominating it the way a buried incident that is too terrifying to confront dominates a nightmare and occasionally breaks its surface" (58). Whether the anxiety producing theme was the "intensely acute horror and apprehension of the 'unknown terror and mystery in which our life is passed'" (Bush 57), a remorseful guilt constellated in the images of abused women, or regret concerning the split with the father,

these latent complexes erupt from below in Eliot's breakdown of 1921, dragging him off to the inferno of convalescent home and sanatorium. There that momentary "crystallization of the mind", which Eliot associated with mystical experience, seems to have occurred, revealing the mythic structure added to his material after his breakdown. Here again, the inferno reveals its positive face as granary of the seed forms of the imaginal.

Bush goes on to argue that at the center of the nightmare we find Tiresias, who is associated with Oedipus as the figure who directs the search for self knowledge. Given the facts that Eliot's mother visited him in England only after his father's death, that she was herself a poet, that Eliot felt compelled to hide Vivien (who Bush argues was as "adoring and repressive" as Eliot's mother (54)) during his mother's visit, and that he collapsed after the strain of the visit, such a suggestion of Oedipal complications is plausible. But Tiresias is also a central figure in the *Odyssey* (which Smith suggests as an alternative model for the poem); he appears in the underworld to reveal not only Odysseus's mother, but all the great figures of Greek myth as well. Eliot's journey also moved through collapse into the underworld, where all the voices of myth were activated. Perhaps even more significant is that Tiresias, like Aeneas's father, reveals the pattern or life design behind the hero's wanderings. Hence, Tiresias unites the motifs of the mothers, myth, and the problem of destiny or design--all of which were crucial concerns during the composition of *The Waste Land*, as they were to all the Modernists.

Although *The Waste Land* may have come from the "inner hell" of Eliot's "family situation" (Bush 70), it quickly moves more deeply into the chthonic terrain of collective myth (underworld as granary). The mixture of personal and collective contents here parallels Mann's movement, in *The Magic Mountain*, from the polymorphous perversity of Hans Castorp's early dreams of Pribislav Hippe, to the Jungian levels of the archetypes in "Snow." In Hillman's terms, we move beyond the underground (*ge*) of root and seed (the personal complexes of the poet), towards the *eidola* of soul in the underworld (*chthon*) (*Dream* 35f.).

Bush argues that Eliot may possibly have experienced a "religious illumination during the process of re-visioning the fragments of the poem, and that his reshaping points to a recognition of a pattern in his life that he had not seen before" (72). That is to say, Eliot's collapse and creative descent to the underworld led to the revelation of his entelechy (the "fundamental gestalt" or myth he lived by), in much the same way that the *nekyia* in the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* produced a revelation of destiny. For Eliot, this revelatory movement out of life and into soul, under the aegis of creative breakdown and exile, is explicitly related to poetry and dreams (along with hallucinations and visions a neglected subject of interest to Eliot since his college days, according to Bush (49)). In an essay on Marston, Eliot writes of "a pattern behind the pattern ... the kind of pattern we perceive in our own lives only

at rare moments and detachment, drowsing in sunlight. It is the pattern drawn by what the ancient world called Fate" (qtd. in Bush: 72). Here again, dream and the descent to the underworld of psyche lead to a revelation of those archetypal patterns which give shape and significance to art and life.

2.2 Later Poems

As noted above, Elizabeth Drew argues that the pattern (the entelechy) behind Eliot's entire development, and of individual works, can be discussed in terms of what she calls "the archetype of transformation" (13). This process, she says, involves an experience of detachment from the objective reality of ego centres, and a descent into darkness which leads to the discovery of a deeper focus of awareness. This new dimension of being, she says, can be symbolized either as "some form of enclosure, a *temenos* ordered in a mandala pattern uniting opposites" (13), or in some other "abstract pattern" revealed in dream symbols (141). As such, this process of development involves the death of an old life, followed by a sequence of archetypal images leading to a "vital relationship between ego and a larger order, which arranges itself into some kind of symbolic design" (14).

This revelation, then, of what Eliot called "the pattern behind the pattern" in the passage above, is essentially that manifestation of the *eidola*, that "larger order of a new dimension" Drew relates to Jung's idea of the Self. Furthermore, Drew argues that the discovery of this new center of consciousness occurs under the guidance of an anima figure, whose progressive humanization leads to the emergence of the image of a miraculous child, symbolic of the potential energies of growth inherent in the new life (141). The relevance of this dynamic to *Four Quartets* is clear when one considers the mandala forms (garden and rose, and the four poems of five sections each) and the recurrent imagery of children hidden in the leaves. As an illustration of this development, Drew points out that in *Ash Wednesday* (1930) the "scattering of the bones is the symbol of the dissolution of the old ego as the centre of being, while the Rose and Garden become the new centre" (106). The leopards who devour the protagonist in the second section of the poem effect the death of ego leading to the revelation of the Rose and the Garden. Furthermore, they are the Lady's leopards, an anima or soul figure who though still primitive is nevertheless a step beyond Belladonna, the Lady of Situations in *The Waste Land*.

The Lady with her three white leopards under a juniper tree is another manifestation of the archetypal image of the Great Mother (combining loving and terrible, spiritual and material aspects) so frequent in Modernism. As in Hans Castorp's dream vision in the "Snow" chapter of *The Magic Mountain*, the image of the Lady combines death and dismemberment, haunting silence, and the exaltation of spiritual revelation leading to poetry: she feeds to satiety on the poet's legs, heart, liver, and skull. She then meditates on the Virgin, embracing the opposites of serenity and stress, wholeness and violation. Yet

her association with the leopards points to a pagan background connecting the goddess with powerful felines that Joseph Campbell traces back to the Anatolian Cybele, and beyond to "the Goddess enthroned giving birth, flanked and supported by lions" found at Catal Huyuk (c.5000 B.C.) ("Goddess" 78). Eliot might easily have encountered these images in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, or in Jane Harrison's *Prolegomena to a Study of Greek Religion* (1903). It is wholly characteristic of Eliot, and of Modernist works in general, that the emergence of this very syncretistic mythic image follows the loss of hope, breakdown, desperation, and death of the first section of the poem ("Because I do not hope to turn again"). Here again is an illustration of the way in which the descent to the underworld leads to the revelation of the primordial images of psyche, as the metaphor undergoes its modulation from inferno to granary.

Eliot's earlier poem, *The Hollow Men* (1925), is very explicit in its use of the myth of the underworld, and again combines the descent with the revelation of archetypal imagery and fundamental ideas. The first three sections of the poem are predominately concerned with death and the underworld: there, those who have crossed over to the Kingdom of death see formless shapes and colorless shades who whisper like the wind and huddle together like rats in a cellar. As James Hillman notes, "The speech of the dead is a whisper, and Roman poets ... refer to the dead as mute" (*Dream* 206). In addition, Eliot makes the same association between the dream and the underworld Hillman makes, referring twice in the poem to death as a kingdom of dreams. Section III of the poem continues to emphasize death, in its evocation of a waste land where a dead man prays beneath the light of a dying star and lovers stroll singly through the kingdom of death.

Section IV keeps us in the underworld, echoing Psalm 23, set in a lost valley of death. Here, the speechless dead gather along the beachside of a humid river. To this traditional imagery of whispering shades wandering along Stygian shores in the twilight, Eliot adds the motif of blindness, which, as Barbara Walker notes, is one of the meanings of the name Aidoneus (366). At this low point however a glimmer of hope arises in the form of a star rising like a rose over the dismal kingdom. That is to say the descent precipitates the revelation of the rose. Since the rose anticipates the archetypal imagery of both *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*, it can be seen as transitional: the underworld again modulates from inferno to *temenos* as Eliot undergoes the second major transformation in his career.

"Marina" follows a parallel movement, very similar to Yeats's Byzantium poems discussed above, out of the death-in-life of human generation towards "a new life unlike the old life of the physical senses and yet at the same time a heightening and embodiment of it" (Drew 130). Here the element of hope is more pronounced. The structure and imagery of this poem (a voyage across water towards a spiritually animated afterlife) parallel Yeats, and

resolves his dilemma concerning the relationship between spirit and matter by suggesting that the old world of the senses is not lost, but simply heightened by the infusion of a regenerative spiritual potency "diffused throughout the universe" (Drew 130).

Like "Sailing to Byzantium," "Marina" begins with the animalistic ecstasy of human generation, which is rejected by the poet and becomes empty of meaning as a result of the journey across the water (a traditional image of the descent to the underworld) to a place of grace. Then the woodthrush sings through the fog, like Yeats's golden bird in "Sailing to Byzantium" or his "cocks of Hades" in "Byzantium", summoning the poet to a suggestion of new life, here in the form of children laughing and running amidst the leaves beside the sleepy waters. Hence, Eliot lies down "where all the ladders start", in the underworld of dream and spiritual grace, in lines echoing Yeats at many points. The movement is out of life and into soul, a journey through the underworld, with the promise, in Eliot's poem, of the rediscovery of a natural world not unconnected with spiritual grace, i.e., of *Anima mundi*.

2.3 Four Quartets

This movement towards a place of intersection, where the worlds of time and eternity, of ego and soul, meet in a still point, culminates in *Four Quartets*. In these last poems, as Drew points out, the orientation towards a new center of being is completed by a moment of spiritual grace, "a temporary crystallization of the mind" (as Eliot wrote of the mystical "communion with the Divine" (qtd. in Drew: 144)). This crystallization reveals the archetypal design of soul, the informing pattern behind the life and work. The still lotus pool and garden, then, become both the *temenos* where transfiguration occurs, and the granary, where the seed forms of the imaginal are revealed.

Like *The Waste Land*, these poems were written under conditions of personal and collective crisis amounting to a recurrence of the descent to the underworld. In 1937, Vivien was committed to an asylum, and this stirred up the old furies of Eliot's severe guilt, perhaps explaining his reference to "an acute personal reminiscence (never to be explicated, of course, but to give power from well below the surface)" as an informing resonance in *Four Quartets* (qtd. in Bush: 219). The metaphor of an agonizing memory structuring and giving power to the poems from below is, again, a conception relevant to the complex notion of the underworld, as both a place of unredeemable pain (inferno), of creative power, and of the *eidola* giving shape and significance to life and art (granary).

Eliot's mood during this period was complicated by the failure of his play *The Family Reunion* in 1939, and the subsequent fear that his career had ended. He had also disbanded the journal *Criterion* which, as Ronald Bush writes, "had been the rock of his London existence for sixteen years" (210). This

occurred nine months before the German invasion of Poland, an event which, taken together with these personal symptoms of decline, led to what Eliot described as a "depression of spirits so different from any other experience of 50 years as to be a new emotion" (qtd. in Bush: 210). It was under these conditions of acute depression that "Burnt Norton" darkens towards "East Coker", in response to both "Vivien and Europe's suffering" (Bush 211). Suffering and collapse produce an emphasis on death in the four poems, and on *poesis* as the discovery of a "pattern behind the pattern" that transfigures the story of the past and unites the opposites of time and eternity. Death and the revelation of poetic pattern again mingle to dissipate despair.

Elizabeth Drew has emphasized the archetypal design of the mandala in *Four Quartets*, with its four parts of five sections each, its epiphany in the circular lotus pool, and its revolution around the immovable center of the moving world, imaged as a rose. She does not, however, mention the many conjoined oppositions in the poems (time and eternity, past and present, prose and poetry, image and discourse, free verse and stanza forms, death and life, etc.) which Jung took to be symbolic of the achieved wholeness of the Self.³ Altogether, these are certainly the most highly structured of all Eliot's works, with the many stanzas, couplets, and sestinas. In fact, the idea of patterns of order emerges as a central theme of the poem. The epiphany of mystical patterns of immanent divinity, and the emphasis on design in *Four Quartets* is a natural consequence of the allusions to the underworld, in itself a recurrent motif: the awareness of death apparently leads to a consciousness of destiny, of the governing patterns of life revealed in art. Many passages in the poem point towards the metaphorical dynamic of the underworld.

First of all, "Burnt Norton" begins in a place beyond hope, time, and redemption. (This theme of the movement beyond hope is picked up again in section III of "East Coker," where, as we shall see, the myth of the descent to the underworld is clear). Section III of "Burnt Norton" remains in lodged in the animosity of a sickened limbo where souls are lost and buffeted by a cold, timeless wind. These are Dante's neutrals in the Inferno: full of meaningless fantasies, they are apathetic and unable to concentrate. The only way out of this hell is to descend more deeply beneath the melancholy city into the chthonic depths, where isolation is inviolable and both sense and spirit are darkened by denial.

This descent below London's various gloomy neighborhoods towards the vast regions of the soul in the underworld leads to section V, where the theme of silence is combined with the theme of form and pattern. That is to say, the poem moves directly through the eclipse and burial of the sun in section IV towards that orderly movement revealed in the moment between death and life in section V. Again, apocalypse is seen as that doom leading to revelation. We have moved from ego (Persephone among the gardens and then gloomy hills on the surface) to soul (Persephone married to Hades, lord of silence and

shades, whose "benefactory intelligence" dispenses knowledge of the *eidola* which pattern life (Hillman, *Dream* 121)).

These themes remain central in the second poem, "East Coker". The first section begins with death, collapse, and transformation: the imagery is of flame, ash, earth, rotting flesh and bone, and manure feeding the corn. The emergence of corn here is interesting, as Demeter was associated with grains of various sorts, and Persephone with the seed rotting in the earth during winter. The section then moves to the appearance of Eliot's ancestral dead dancing in the warmth of midnight while flowers slumber in the silence. Dream and death combine here to conjure a vision of a sacred marriage rite (Persephone becomes bride of Hades in the underworld), another Jungian symbol of the alchemical achievement of the philosopher's stone. But the joy of the festive dead soon subsides to the oppressive humidity of the manure heap.⁴

Section II and Section III continue the descent, going deeper: in the former, we read that the dancers and the houses have vanished into the ethereal vacancy of vast, funereal darkness hidden beneath the fields. This is indeed to go more deeply than the underground of root and seed (gc), where corpses nourish the corn. Here we descend to the truly *chthonic*, to those "cold dead depths" which have "nothing to do with fertility" (Hillman, *Dream* 35-40). This depth is the frigid despair with which Eliot urges a kind of a desolate reconciliation. It is that domain, where Hades and Persephone join in marriage, so remote from human affairs that it has no relation to the "life and doings of men on earth" (Erwin Rohde, qtd. in Hillman, *Dream*: 38). This region is pure psyche severed from the concerns of waking life. It is that "whole celestial hemisphere curved below our earth ... a pneumatic region of air and wind ... dense cold air without light" (Hillman, *Dream* 38-39). It is also, as Eliot indicates here in section III of "East Coker", a divine darkness analogous to the empty wings of an unlit theatre.

Eliot next uses a literal image of descent, a subway train halted tediously between stops, to express the terrible emptiness of the underworld, where one must wait hopelessly like Beckett's Godot. He compares this condition to the mind anaesthetized by ether, as at the beginning of "Prufrock." Although the reference to ether here refers firstly to the anesthetic gas, the undertones of meaning include "the space beyond the earth's atmosphere" originally conceived of by the Greeks as "the very bottom of Hades, its farthest chasm ... personified as the son of ether and earth" (Hillman, *Dream* 38). As "a composite of the most material and immaterial" (Hillman, *Dream* 38), Eliot's image of the emptiness deepening to nothingness behind every face on the underground train is precisely akin to Tartarus. And from the deeper abyss of silence and despair, we move to the sense of a pattern unifying death and life in the last section of "East Coker". This revelation of order leads to that deeper union of ego and soul, time and eternity symbolized in Persephone's marriage and a central theme of *Four Quartets*. Here again, the rape and descent has led to

the revelation of the archetypal design giving shape and significance to life and the poems.

In "The Dry Salvages", the third of the four quartets, imagery of death and water flow together into a strong current of undertow.⁵ Both river and sea are littered with the wreckage of human loss: the god of the river in section I destroys what the river carries in section II: black men, cows, and coops. Foreign corpses and clothing become the flotsam of the sea in section I, in section II bones pray to the God of Death, and in section IV the Virgin Mary (Stella Maris) is invoked to pray for those whose voyages ended in the wreckage along the beach or in the gorge of the sea.

These are the waters the poem traverses, Stygian river, sea, and lake, between this and the yonder shore. In his slowly leaking boat, the poet, like Dante, drifts among the wreckage later identified as the abiding pain of other people. The poem emphasizes the "permanence of agony, rocks, and dead black men in the river, not the eternity, redemption of the sea" (Bush 218-219). For these waters are infernal, clogged with waste, clamoring with endless lamentation, fixated by pain. This inferno, redeemable (if at all) only by supplication too terrifying to utter, is where Eliot, like Dante, assigns the occult artists of the underworld: the astrologers, mediums, palm readers, tea-leave oracles, and satanic magicians of section V.

Thus far we have followed a Heraclitean *descensus ad inferos*: from air to earth to the waters below. But "from earth comes water, and from water, soul" (Heraclitus, qtd. in Hillman, *Dream*: 153). In the last quartet, the soul endures purgatorial fire. "Little Gidding" begins with that movement beyond the smell of earth that we have seen in Yeats's "Byzantium" poems. The season mixes spring and winter, darkness and eerie light. It is the timeless time when Persephone's bliss intersects with Pluto's bale, when Demeter's flowery meadows join with the mingled frost and fire of the underworld, and the soul trembles in response to its special season. It seems in fact, that only when the king collapses at the completion of his journey (as he does in section I) does soul come to life. When ego and persona collapse, and things fall apart, psyche makes its way via barnyard and tombstone to the place where the inner ear opens to the souls in the underworld, whose fiery speech communicates secrets in an unknown language. In this sequence, the pentecostal fire of the descending spirit is conflated with purgatorial flame, enacting the Heraclitean doctrine that the way up is the way down.

Eliot's evocation of the underworld in these motifs of the first section of "Little Gidding" combines Classical and Christian elements, and unites soul and spirit. The tombstone, for example, is reached via the pig-sty, a spontaneous association of the pig with the initiatory descent to the underworld extending back to the Classical mysteries at Eleusis and beyond. As Joseph Campbell notes, in the Homeric meeting of Odysseus and Laertes "we find that the

archaic Eleusinian-Melanesian pig motif carries the great theme and frames the high moments of the merging of the two worlds of Eternity and Time, Death and Life, Father and Son" (*Occidental Myth* 176). The relevance of this comment to Eliot's conflation of the eternal now and historical time in this section is intriguing. For it suggests that when Eliot took up this theme, the myth of the descent to the underworld, with its journey to by dark waters to the end of the world, emerged spontaneously, in precise detail.

In the next section of "Little Gidding," the death of the four elements completes the descent, "annihilating all that's made / To a green thought in a green shade" (as Marvell puts it). Here the shade is literally a denizen of the domain of the dead, derived from Dante and *Hamlet*, who appears during Eliot's matutinal peregrinations during the bombings of World War II. His epiphany follows the familiar pattern: final collapse (the death of the very stuff of creation, the four elements) leads to the revelation of those archetypal images of the underworld which provide the pattern which renews and transfigures the vanished world loved by the self (section III). Again, apocalypse here means both doom (of the four elements) and revelation (of the dead master and the pattern which redeems).

Furthermore, the description of the apparition follows many of the conventional images of the underworld: he is blown about with the dead leaves by an ethereal wind; it is same pre-dawn nowhere when *Hamlet's* ghost appears; the restless, unredeemed spirit wanders between two worlds, and the gifts he reserves for the poet's age are the traditional torments of the underworld--frigid absence, rage, and a piercing remorse (the folkloric motif of the life review at death, now of great interest to the young science of thanatology). In addition, the dead master offers the poet the pungent fruit of death. This is Persephone's pomegranate, food of the underworld, wafer of initiatory communion with the dead. Like the allusion to the pig, the pomegranate emerges spontaneously, suggesting that the informing pattern of the classical *nekya* is working unconsciously here, below the more explicit references to Dante, *Hamlet*, and Yeats.

In section III of "Little Gidding," as noted above, the sense of the revelation of transfiguring patterns becomes explicit: the vanished world of beloved people and places is regenerated and reshaped according to a new, world redeeming design. These lines echo the discovery, in section II of "The Dry Salvages," of a shape and significance of the past unsuspected during life. In both cases, death and the descent to the underworld (here in section III imaged as night, blindness, and forgotten corpses dangling from the gallows) coincides with the revelation of design. And what the poet in this section takes from the realm of the dead is what Orpheus takes--a powerful and perfected symbolic image upon which to construct song. The blind dead (remember that one of the meanings of *Aidoneus* is "the blind one") bequeath

this image, giving that shape and significance to life, and to the poem, which is the function of the *eidola* of the underworld.

In the seven line stanzas of section IV, we learn that, as in the case of Persephone's abduction, it is love, eros, that is the source of the torment of the underworld: Eliot evokes the image of the shirt soaked in the blood of Nessus given Hercules as a deadly wedding present. Here again, the autobiographical aspects of Eliot's wounding and descent resurfaces, as a kind of guarded confessional, a last rite. For just as eros urged the abduction of Persephone, and just as Deianeira wove the shirt drenched in the poisoned blood of Nessus, in an effort to preserve her husband's love, so Vivien Eliot suffered the erotic afflictions of Persephone and tormented her husband after their separation in a desperate effort to retrieve him: she was left behind at the ford, to languish in the underworld of madness. Eliot then, like Hercules, ascends the purgatorial pyre for redemption, and apotheosis (gratifying penance for an ambitious poet!). As Drew and Edward Edinger have pointed out, this trial unites the creative and destructive aspects of fire into a single process, which leads to the alchemical transmutation of the four elements which had "died" in section II.

In conclusion, we have seen how the myth of the descent to the underworld has informed Eliot's life and work. The personal and collective collapse around 1921 (his inferno) led to the activation of the voices of the dead poets of the tradition (underworld as the ancestral vault) and to the discovery of the mythic method employed in *The Waste Land* (underworld as granary). The design of his poetry is derived from these complex patterns activated and informed by the descent to the underworld. Although Eliot's primary model for this conflation of death, informing design, and poetry is Dante, other redactions of the myth, pagan and Classical, have also been underlined. Eliot's method unites the central concerns of an archetypal poetics of modernism (eros, pathology, and the image) through a syncretistic approach to myth.

Given, then, the pervasive presence of the underworld in *Four Quartets*, it is small wonder that in the last section of "Little Gidding" Eliot compares poems and epitaphs. Every poem, that is to say, is an icon of soul-making (which is itself an image of poesis), whereby the imaginal patterns of psyche are revealed through the death of ego. Life itself is informed throughout by death, as any direction leads through earth, air, fire, or water to the tombstone, whose hieroglyphics the poet seeks to render intelligible. Indeed, the entire opus of soul-making, whereby the philosopher's stone is distilled in the symbolic patterns of poetry, is summarized by Eliot as a death, departure, and rebirth in this last section of *Four Quartets*. As readers, we follow the dead to the source of the Styx in the underworld, and return tongued with fire, having, like Yeats, "mummy truths to tell."

Notes

¹ Elizabeth Drew notes that "hell and purgatory are familiar territories to him" (31); Lyndall Gordon notes that Eliot's "marriage was to be the grim underside of his life, the secret inferno to be traversed" (74); and Ronald Bush suggests that *The Waste Land* came from the "inner hell" of Eliot's personal nightmare (70).

² Northrop Frye cites *The Waste Land* as an example of the persistence of the "infernal journey" in modern poetry (65). Gordon calls *The Waste Land* "a psychological hell" with many mini-hells contained within it (106). She also calls "A Game of Chess" the hellish power struggle of a diabolical marriage (111), and notes that "in the lives Eliot invokes--Dante, Christ, Augustine, the grail knight, Ezekiel--there is always a dark period of trial, whether in a desert, a slough of despond, or a hell, followed by initiation, conversion, or the divine light itself" (110). Ronald Bush describes the opening section of "The Fire Sermon" as hell (60). Elizabeth Drew notes that the allusions to Tammuz, Adonis, Osiris, Dionysus, and Christ in *The Waste Land* "refer to the time between the death of the god and resurrection, the time he spends in the netherworld" (84), and she links the knight in the Chapel Perilous to "all the other myths dealing with journeys to the netherworld" informing the poem (86). Grover Smith suggests that Phlebas the Phoenician sailor is Osiris, the Egyptian lord of the underworld, notes that the descent into hell is an important clue to reading the poem mythologically, and refers to Dick's article on the descent in the poem (106-110).

³ See particularly *Mysterium Coniunctionis* and *Psychology and Alchemy* or Edinger's synopsis, *Anatomy of the Psyche* Chapter 8.

⁴ Hillman discusses revelry, feasting, and dung as emblematic of the underworld (*Dream* 171f.), and Ronald Bush points out that this whole section of the poem may have come from a story of ghostly revelry disturbing a tourist (213).

⁵ Hillman develops the connection between water and death in dream images (*Dream* 151), and Gaston Bachelard devotes an entire book, *Water and Dreams*,

to a phenomenology of what he calls the Ophelia complex, in which water, death, and the imaginal are united.

Chapter Three

Soul Making in D.H. Lawrence

D. H. Lawrence made extensive use of the mythologies of the underworld, because he experienced them in every aspect of his life. It is a commonplace of biographical studies that "For Lawrence," as Aldous Huxley put it, "existence was a continuous convalescence; it was as though he were newly reborn from a mortal illness every day of his life" (30). Huxley goes on to evoke a sense of what he calls Lawrence's "daimon" by saying that, in contrast to most men in a scientific age, Lawrence "had eyes that could see, beyond the walls of light, far into the darkness, sensitive fingers that kept him continually aware of the environing mystery" (10). Donald Gutierrez summarizes the data on four of Lawrence's near death experiences, all of them associated with major novels, and suggests that his "experience of daily rebirth induced by his tubercular condition resembles what the thanatologists call a 'postmortem life' or what John Keats termed a 'posthumous existence'" (15-24). In other words, Lawrence spent much of his life in the underworld, in a continuous re-enactment of Persephone's abduction and return: she was his daimon, and the *nekyia* the myth he lived by.¹

There were of course other myths used to embody the concern with death and rebirth "so pivotal to Lawrence's vitalist thinking and feeling about human existence" (Gutierrez 24): Noah's flood, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, Isis and Osiris, Hermes, the Phoenix, and Quetzalcoatl. In addition, his writing is saturated with alchemical and perinatal terminology and imagery, both of which revolve around the vortex of death and rebirth. These embody the fundamental narrative pattern of all of Lawrence's work, which Colin Clarke describes as "the process of dying into being, the lapsing of consciousness which is yet the discovery of a deeper consciousness, the dissolution of the hard, intact, ready defined ego" (3).

The descent to the underworld of primal emotions and mythic imagery is a projection of the fundamental dynamics of his creative imagination. The revelation of the archaic images of the imaginal psyche (its *eidola*) occurs ritualistically in the very act of writing: the opus which Hillman calls soul-making is personified in the text itself, so that the tenor of metaphorical

concern is not only the search for a new world after collapse in social-political, scientific, religious, and psychological spheres, but also for soul itself. This approach emphasizes neither ontology, theology, philosophy, nor ethical morality, but poesis as soul-making. It is not primarily concerned with Lawrence's search for renewal of being and society, with theological aspects of his worship of "dark gods," or with a philosophical morality, but with *aisthesis*, the direct presentation of the imaginal soul in the text.²

The Persephone complex so obsessed Lawrence that a complete consideration is beyond the scope of this work. It informs nearly all the major novels (*Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and *The Plumed Serpent*), several poems ("Bavarian Gentians" and "The Ship of Death" among them), the essay "Pornography and Obscenity", and *Apocalypse*, which is an extended meditation on the descent to Hades. As with the other Modernist writers, so with Lawrence: the revelation of mythic patterns requires a previous crippling of ego, a deathlike movement out of life towards a renewed awareness of soul as the poetic basis of consciousness. Rape leads to revelation.

3.1 *The Rainbow*

Each of the three generations of lovers in *The Rainbow* re-enact the abduction and descent to the underworld in their erotic battles, which move through resistance and death to revelation and renewal. The imagery of the Persephone complex first constellates around the figure of Lydia Lensky, who is seen "walking in the Underworld, where the shades throng intelligibly" (51). Before meeting Tom Brangwen, she has a job nursing a dying rector in Yorkshire, where she lives in "darkness ... blotted safely away from living" (53). It is into this netherworld that she repeatedly forces Tom Brangwen to descend. But Persephone is not only dread queen of the mystic underworld; she is also the innocent girl reborn in the spring, along with the flowers she was picking before her bereavement. Hence, Lydia is frequently associated with flowers in the novel, which come in the spring and catalyze her return to life.

When she first establishes contact with Brangwen, she is seen, like Persephone, as a lovely flower: "The warmth flowed through her, she felt herself opening, unfolding, asking, as a flower opens in full request under the sun she was as new as a flower that unsheathes itself and stands always ready, waiting, receptive" (56). But in a clever revisioning of the myth, Lawrence reverts to what was probably the original, matriarchal version: by plucking this flower, Tom is swept under into a "black bottomless despair" (56). Tom, then, exchanges roles, confronting in Lydia the same "terrible painful unknown" (58) that Persephone comes face to face with in the Homeric Hymn. Her "wide grey-brown eyes with very dark fathomless pupils" evoke the depth and darkness of the underworld, and they ignite a "fine flame running under his skin" (32) akin to the fire below. She is like a "fate" (32) leading Brangwen through death into "another world of life" (33), opening "another centre of

consciousness" (39).³

Tom's ambivalent oscillation between resistance and resignation, between the old world and the new, between ego and soul, between death and rebirth, is finally resolved at the end of Chapter 3, when he yields to Lydia's undertow (91-97).⁴ In this scene, the final stages of the transition from the perspective of the ego to the perspective of the soul are completed, as the lovers move again through the phases of battle, death, and rebirth. Lucente sees as characteristic of the Persephone complex (109). And it is precisely at this point that the rape leads to the revelation of the rainbow and the complex of mythological ideas (*eidola*) associated with it. Brangwen's initiatory descent to Persephone's kingdom is seen as a "baptism," a "complete confirmation," and their passage into "the new world" is called "the transfiguration, the glorification, the admission" (96). At the end of the chapter, when "God had passed through the married pair" to take up his abode in the household, the rainbow appears for the first time in the novel, and little Anna dances beneath it (96-97). Here the allusion is clearly to the Flood and the Covenant, the deep structures of the imagination activated by Persephone's descent: the inferno of the collapse of the will has yielded to the revelation of the riches of the underworld as a storehouse of the imaginal.⁵

Will and Anna Brangwen, the second generation of lovers in the novel, continue to be portrayed against the backdrop of the underworld. During their honeymoon, Will imagines the two of them "buried like a seed in darkness" (145). He wants to stay "in the timeless universe of free, perfect limbs and immortal breast" (150) longer than Anna does, and the inevitable frustration of his desire to do so turns him into a raging Hades. He becomes a "fiendish" figure trapped "in a black, violent underworld" (152). This in turn tortures Anna until she too is reduced to "the old anguished, childish desolation" (153), and she attempts to escape to the innocent fields of Demeter, plucking flowers with her nymphs. Will, however, "would destroy her flowery innocent bliss" (182). He seems to her "some vast, hideous darkness" (186) which, Persephone like, she fears and despises: "There is something horrible in you, something dark and beastly in your will," she says to him (186). This forces Will into "a very black hell" from which he "could not escape" (186). Lawrence reiterates this image of Will as a violent, frustrated Hades, trapped in his underworld kingdom, powerless to prevent Persephone's escape, yet compelled to try and drag her down to the "strange, secret places" (159) of his "underworld refuge" (160).⁶

To this network of mythological allusions, Lawrence adds a new and crucial dimension to our understanding of the Persephone complex. He identifies Anna with the mind, knowledge, and rational intellect, and Will with the irrational emotive soul, the unknown which Anna resists: whereas she "clung to the worship of the human knowledge," and "believed in the omnipotence of the human mind," he, "blind as a subterranean thing, just ignored the human mind and ran after his own dark-souled desires" (173). In Church, Will lets his mind

sleep in a way that infuriates Anna; she sees him as "a blind thing, a dark force, without knowledge" (109). His inclination is towards "things he could not understand with the mind" (165). He does "not want things to be intelligible," preferring "a dark, nameless emotion, the emotion of all the great mysteries of passion" (158). Their conflict revolves around Will's ecstatic response to the mythological images on the stained-glass windows in Chureh (159-160), and indeed to all of the images of the Bible. When approached as "historical fact" with the "clear eyes of the mind," the story of the wine at Cana is absurd; but when Will attempts to adopt Anna's position here, "his whole soul" cries out in rejection of the idea and in hatred against this "violation of himself" (171).

Hence, the Persephone-Hades conflict in this chapter can be seen as re-enacting Lawrence's central polemic, which pits the powerful intuitive awareness of "blood-consciousness" against the intellect. Like Hillman, he identifies the former with soul, and its relationship to the symbolic imagery of myth and religion, which transcends mental reduction. As Hades, Will personifies soul, eros, and the "metaphorical perspective" which the literal minded Anna, who personifies the naturalistic point of view, experiences as a "death-dealing blow" (Hillman, *Archetypal* 21). It is precisely this "metaphorical transposition--this death dealing move that at the same time reawakens consciousness to a sense of soul" (Hillman, *Archetypal* 22), that Anna and earlier her father Will defend themselves against. Since the underworld is equivalent with soul, that "imagining possibility in our nature, the experiencing through reflective speculation, dream, image, and fantasy" (Hillman, *Archetypal* 16-17), Anna's resistance of Will can be seen as implying a rejection of soul, "that mode which recognizes all realities as primarily symbolic, or metaphorical" (Hillman, *Archetypal* 17). Her fear that Will wants to drag her down and kill her spirit, shows that "the metaphorical perspective also kills: it brings about the death of naive realism, naturalism, and literal understanding" (Hillman, *Archetypal* 21). As Hillman points out, "the erotic struggles in any relationship are also psychological struggles with images" (*Archetypal* 51).

In the third generation of lovers in *The Rainbow*, Lawrence continues to weave his web of mythic associations (Biblical, Classical, alchemical, and perinatal) around a vortex of the underworld. Ursula inherits the debate between literalism and metaphor from her parents. Like her father Will, who is described as a "strong, dark soul fixed like a root in unexpressed depths that fascinated and terrified her" (264), Ursula is moved by powerful symbolic images, whether religious or romantic. When rational analysis or crude realism deflate the ecstasies she is thrown into by these symbols, she reverts to "the non-literal application of the scriptures" which preserves their metaphorical significance (277). In aligning herself with Will's susceptibility to the symbolic imagination, she continues the debate with her mother Anna, who, in her "violent trance of motherhood" (220), represents the fecundity and naturalism of Demeter, which Ursula, like Persephone, is "passionately against" (264-265).⁷

Ursula's attachment to the archetypal image of her father as the denizen of a dark, richly symbolic underworld, whose images and passions are inaccessible to the waking consciousness of normal life, is sustained throughout the novel. In a sense, she remains married to the invisible essences, the elemental passions, to the exclusion of human lovers. Her eventual rejection of motherhood and marriage, in favor of the fine frenzy offered by Hades, follows closely Hillman's understanding of the meaning of Persephone's abduction:

This rape threatens the intact psychological system that takes its strength from life, holding to human relationships and the natural ways of Demeter's daughter. Rape moves the Persephone soul from the being of Demeter's daughter to the being of Hades' wife, from the natural being of generation, what is given to a daughter by mothering life, to the psychic being of marriage with what is alien, different, and is not given (*Dream* 48).

It is precisely this movement out of the life of maternal generation, and into the alien territory of the soul, which informs Ursula's entire development. Hence, throughout the novel Ursula sustains a connection to "Hades, the God of Invisibles" (Hillman, *Dream* 27) which makes it impossible to establish normal relations with a specific human being. Every encounter with her lover Skrebensky propels her beyond him into the fierce, elemental passions of the underworld.

The first instance of this occurs during the firelight dance celebrating Fred Brangwen's wedding (Chapter XI), when Ursula feels herself transported to "the depths of the underworld" (318). During this scene, Ursula is held back by Skrebensky, who weighs upon her "like a loadstone" exerting a "dark impure magnetism" (319). He enacts the role of a tyrannical Hades, imprisoning Persephone in his subterranean domain, impeding her flight upward towards "more communion with the moon" (319). Skrebensky, however, is a kind of annihilated Hades. Although he struggles to "exert all his power" over Ursula and to "enclose her in a net of shadow" (320), she overpowers him with her cold metallic passion for the moon.⁸

Ursula's journey remains oriented towards this cool passion of Hecate. Her attachment to the visionary world of the unseen strengthens, and her identification with Persephone becomes nearly complete. Riding at night on a train, she has "a glimpse of something working entirely apart from the purpose of the human world" (436). This vision occurs "a little while before Easter" (438), and signifies the recurrence of Ursula's descent into the holy darkness of the underworld. Here she plays the role of both Persephones: as Persephone at play in the sunny fields with her nymphs, she inhabits the narrow circumference of the "arc-lamp, wherein the moths and children played in the security of the blinding light" (437); as Queen of the Underworld, Bride of Hades, she is "dark and unrevealed," like a "seed buried in dry ash".⁹ She

rejects the vanity of the city in favor of "the vast darkness that wheeled round about, with half-revealed shapes lurking on the edge" (438). Descent to that darkness must be seen by the ego as rape; but from the perspective of the soul, it is revelation: this death reveals the angel, buried like a seed of theophany in the flesh of the crucifixion.

Ursula remains more attached to these unseen dimensions of the soul and its elementary manifestations (moon, animals, angels, sea, silver, and stars) than she is to Skrebensky, whom she uses as a vehicle of her transfiguration during passionate trysts which re-enact the *nekylia*. Skrebensky, like Hades, is repeatedly associated with "the horseman's animal darkness" (443), and he leads Ursula across a river to "the profound darkness" which "was their universe" (446). In their final "superb consummation" while standing "at the edge of a cliff, with a great darkness" yawning like Tartarus below them, and an oak tree roaring in the wind above them, they kiss and pass into "the source of creation" (450-451). Here again, Ursula goes beyond Skrebensky as she is transformed into Persephone, Queen of the Underworld: "She passed away as on a dark wind, far, far away, into the pristine darkness of paradise, into the original immortality. She entered the dark fields of immortality" (451) which Greek myth would identify as the Elysian fields. As Persephone, Ursula then leaves Hades, eventually turning against all his "old dead things" (462). This reduces Skrebensky to "the deadly anguish" Hades must have felt when Persephone returned upwards in the spring: he wanders alone in London like "a spectre, divorced from life" through the "ashen sterility" of the streets (457-458). Like one of Eliot's hollow men, he is trapped in his own inferno, and eventually left "cold, dead, inert" on the dunes of the Lincolnshire coast (479).

Ursula, however, survives. Her marriage to psyche (soul) as opposed to ego is consummated in the last chapter of the novel. Here, walking through the stormy fields like a "bird on the wind" (487), Ursula encounters the horses, which thunder by her twice. They seem drawn to her by some invisible power which struggles to prevent her efforts to get back to "the ordered world of man" (489). These are the horses of Hades, let loose from the little cart that held them earlier in the novel, hence completely autonomous from human concerns. They catalyze Ursula's descent to the "bottom of all things" (491), preventing her return, and holding her in the "unconscious, unchanging, unchangeable" underworld. Their lord, Hades, remains unseen, in a world where "time and the flux of change passed away" (490). Ursula first becomes "a stone ... sunk to the bottom of all change," beyond which "there was nothing deeper" (490-491), and then she is reduced to a seed kernel, "free and naked and striving to take new root, to create a new knowledge of Eternity in the flux of Time" (493).

Here the philosopher's stone, which unites the oppositions of spirit and matter, time and eternity, god and man, is associated with a seed in Pluto's cornucopia of riches--those images (*eidola*) which yet fresh images beget, here emerging after the many descents in the novel. Alchemical, Classical, Biblical,

and perinatal allusions combine with the image of the rainbow, the ruby herald of the birth of a New World (and of the book itself, a new world in its own right). Ursula is left waiting for the descent of the "man created by God" who "should come from the Infinite ... to which she herself belonged" (494). It remains only for a God to provide her with one, and Lawrence will fulfill this promise in *Women in Love*.

3.2 *Women in Love*

Like *The Rainbow*, the allusions to the descent to the underworld in *Women in Love* occur initially as a mythic framework giving depth and significance to realistically presented scenes of courtship and sexual love. During the course of these scenes, however, the language develops into a richly layered cluster of archetypal imagery which includes allusions to Classical, Biblical, Egyptian, and Syrian mythologies.¹⁰ Generally all of the characters experience the irrational abductions of passion which make Gudrun's initial perception of Beldover as a kind of underworld set the tone for the whole novel. It seems inhabited throughout by strange otherworldly creatures, from Hermione the "stricken pythoness" (35), to Birkin as Hades, Ursula as Persephone and Aphrodite (or later as Cybele), to Gerald as Cain, Dionysus, or a Nibelung, to Gudrun as a "vivid Medusa" (440), and to the troll-like Loerke at the end of the novel, making "playful remarks as he wandered in hell" (460) imagining a post-apocalyptic underworld "gone cold" where "only white creatures, Polar bears, white foxes, and men like awful white snow-birds" live (444). The novel is a bestiary of the underworld, into which the reader is abducted, like a timid Persephone, by the powerful current of the narrative undertow. Of these characters, however, Ursula is most consistently depicted as Persephone, at home in the underworld.

The first reference to the underworld is of a very general nature. Walking with Ursula to the Crich wedding in the first chapter, Gudrun sees Beldover and environs as "a country in the underworld" and its inhabitants as having "watchful underworld faces" (7). Her reaction contrasts with Ursula's nonchalance: "Never mind them ... they're all right. They all know me, they don't matter" she says (7). Ursula lives and works in this underworld, and will later be clearly identified as Persephone; whereas Gudrun is only visiting, never, during the course of the novel fully at home in the kind of underworld depths Lawrence celebrates.

"Class Room" begins with Ursula teaching children about catkins at the end of the afternoon. As she stands in front of the class, with the flowers in her hands, Birkin startles her, entering the classroom on a "shaft of ruddy, copper-colored light," his face "gleaming like fire" (28): Ursula "thought she was going to faint. All her suppressed, subconscious fear sprang into being, with anguish" (29). The scene alludes precisely to Persephone's abduction, using finely observed realistic details with mythic resonance: the time of day (dusk passing into night), the association of the female with flowers

(Persephone is picking a narcissus when Hades abducts her), the dreamy state of mind and the faint (a literal collapse into the subconscious), the color of the light (in astrological symbolism associated with Venus), and Birkin's fiery face (appropriate to Hades), are all unified by the implicit allusion to the myth.

In a later scene in "Excuse", Ursula is again seen as Persephone, when her passionate jealousy of Hermione disrupts the pastoral harmony of her picnic with Birkin (just as Persephone's idyll with her nymphs was disrupted by the abduction). As Lucente points out, the dialogue and action of the scene are realistic, but the image of Ursula standing at "the hedgerow, picking unconsciously some flesh-pink spindleberries, some of which were burst, showing their orange seeds" (298) indicates what Lucente calls "the framework of mythic associations" (110). It is interesting to note here that we have moved from the association of Ursula with flowers in the "Class Room" scene, to her picking of orange seeds (similar to the pomegranate seeds Persephone eats in the underworld) in this later episode. This shows the development of her relationship with Birkin (moving from the rape to the feast in the underworld), and the continuing emphasis on the psychological aspects of the myth (she stands "unconsciously" picking fruit at the hedgerow).¹¹

The allusion to Persephone's abduction and marriage to Hades continues to its conclusion at the end of "Excuse." If in the hedgerow scene the resistance to Birkin and the abduction prevail, later on a reconciliation occurs which leads to the consummation of the relationship in the Sherwood Forest idyll: Ursula, like Persephone, changes from struggling rape victim to the bride of Hades; from hatred, fear, and rejection of Birkin, to a loving discovery and acceptance of the riches he offers. This is a passage from a literal to an imaginal realism, as a shift in perspective "from the heroic basis of consciousness to the poetic basis of consciousness" (Hillman, *Dream* 137).

Consequently, the archetypal imagery of myth and religion begins to become more evident: when they stop in Southwell Minster, Ursula stands in an "old yard of the inn, smelling straw and stables and petrol" (304), and imagines "the daughters of men coming back to the sons of God, the strange inhuman sons of God who are in the beginning" (305). The imagery here echoes the nativity and the myths of the Old Testament, in a modern setting. It indicates a world reduced to its original condition, and a consciousness detached from life and suffused with the mystery of soul: "What was it all? This was no actual world, it was the dream world of one's childhood--a great circumscribed reminiscence. The world had become unreal. She herself was a strange transcendent reality" (304). Once the abduction has occurred, the imaginal elements of the soul (the mythic constituents of the dream-time of childhood) are activated. Memory becomes *memoria*, a sacred, Platonic "reminiscence" of the archetypes (Hillman, *Myth* 169-182).

Robert Langbaum discusses this move from the "ordinary to the archetypal

or mythical self, then back to a reconstructed individuality" as typifying the rhythm of Lawrence's novels (266). Again, this oscillation between "internalized individuality" and "external archetypal identity" (267) (analogous to the movement from ego to *eidola* James Olney sees as the basic dynamic informing the poetry of Yeats) is the fundamental idea expressed in Persephone's descent to the underworld, a movement from naturalism to myth, from ego to the *eidola* of soul. Langbaum, following Jung, recognizes this process as the activation of an archetype; but rather than pursuing a precise delineation of the nature of this archetype (best conceived of in terms of the Great Mother and the descent to the underworld), Langbaum starts from Lawrence's notion of a "carbon identity" (expounded in a letter to Edward Garnett) to describe this reversion to origins as a process of dissolving "the realistically conceived individual back into the elements out of which life arose", in order to "rediscover those primordial shapes that men first delineated out of earth, air, water, light, as a way of evolving their own sense of identity" (267).

But since the imagery of "Excuse" is as replete with references to biographical (childhood) and mythological origins (Biblical, Grecian, and Egyptian) as it is to elemental origins, this language reflects a shift from earthy literalism to the deeper levels of the imaginal psyche. The four elements represent the basic forms of consciousness (*eidola*). This is in line with the distinction Hillman documents in Greek cosmology between an underground of root and seed (*ge*), and an underworld of ethereal essence (*chthon*) (*Dream* 104-109). It modulates Langbaum's elemental view of the archetypal identity, which he argues Lawrence sees as "entirely naturalistic, psychological, Darwinian" (267), towards the more purely psychological view, signalled by the allusions to the metaphors of myth (the primary elements of a purely imaginal psyche).

The "reversion of sensible forms back to the imaginative forms in which they originate" (Hillman, *Dream* 203) is paralleled in this chapter by Ursula's regression to childhood, by her Biblical reveries, and by Birkin's fantasy of himself as an ancient Greek or Egyptian in contact with the "deepest life source in the human body". In each case, we move from adulthood to childhood, and beyond to the archetypal origins of the imaginal psyche expressed in the mythical allusions in the narrative. We move, in other words, beyond what Langbaum calls the "primordial origins" of the "carbon identity" (259), towards a rediscovery of the origins of all life in the imaginal psyche. And in so doing we move very close to the primacy of the imagination in Wallace Stevens. To do this is to reinstate the primacy of consciousness over matter, an ancient view of life which Kathleen Raine calls "traditional" in her writings on William Blake, and which, as discussed in the introduction, has been called a holonomic view by recent scientists engaged in the effort to construct a new paradigm.

The transition, therefore, from the autobiographical realism of *Sons and Lovers* to the imaginal realism of *Women in Love*, signifies the "curious heightening" of the artistic temper that Thomas Mann associates with "the

habit of regarding life as mythical" (*Essays* 422). Rupert's musing allusions to Cybele and Magna Mater (191-192), whose cult rituals re-enacted the descent to the underworld, the implicit allusions to Persephone, Gerald's identification with Hermes in "Death and Love", and the depiction of the channel crossing later in the novel as a crossing of the Styx into a "desolated underworld" (438), reveal the archetypal inscape which informs Lawrence's life and work from the beginning (his entelechy). The mythologem of the Mother Goddess and the descent to the underworld gives "shape and significance" to every aspect of *Women in Love*. The Persephone complex leads the narrative from Ursula as the flower girl in the classroom, to Persephone picking red seeds before her sacred marriage to Birkin, and continues to shape the later novels, poems, and essays.

3.3 The Plumed Serpent

In *The Plumed Serpent*, Lawrence continues to rely on implicit and explicit allusions to the descent to the underworld in order to give his abundant raw material shape and significance. Once again, the metaphor is flexibly and dexterously applied, embracing the diverse contradictions of Kate's experience of Mexico as being both her "destiny and doom" (22): its futility and hopelessness and its ghostly and demonic blood-lust (underworld as inferno), its revelation of mythic modes of being capable of combating the ills of modern identity (underworld as granary), and its alluring promise of renewal (underworld as *temenos*). Her marriage to Cipriano re-enacts the dynamic of Persephone's abduction, both in her ultimate resistance to him, and in the richness of the archetypal identity he offers her as Malintzi, the name given her after her marriage.

The novel begins with Kate's fortieth birthday and the need for radical change that comes with it. Her husband is dead, and her last ties to Europe are severed in the early chapters when she leaves Owen and Villiers to move to Sayula. This midlife crisis coincides with Don Ramon's, whose wife dies midway through the novel, partly as a result of the strain brought on by his search for a new mode of being. Both characters, then, follow that severing of life attachments and movement into soul that Hillman focuses on in his discussion of Persephone. Lawrence himself nearly died during this period, and was separated for a time from Frieda, so that once again we see the recurrent linkage of personal crisis and works using the myth of the descent to the underworld that we have traced above in the chapters on Yeats and Conrad, Eliot, and Mann.

The underworld is explicitly alluded to at several points in the novel. In the first chapter, Owen, Kate, and Villiers discuss sitting in the "Shade" at the bullfight (5), and when Kate leaves in disgust, Owen is described as "Orpheus looking back into hell" (17). These allusions establish a vision of Mexico which will be developed throughout the novel: the futility, cruelty, hopelessness, and "squalid evil" (19) of the bull ring are attributes of hell

Kate never escapes. Yet the bull fight is also seen as a kind of travesty of the Mithraic mysteries (14) (which involved a ritual slaying of the bull and descent to the underworld), and as such Mexico also holds out a hope of renewal through doom that exerts a powerful spell on Kate. She feels that "Mexico lay in her destiny almost as a doom" (22), and sees the bullfight as a "Doomsday" or "Apocalypse" (12). From the beginning, then, the myth of the underworld is evoked, in the full range of its ambiguities, and Cipriano emerges at the end of the chapter as Kate's guide (19).

Dialogue and setting in the second chapter, "Tea Party in Tlacolula," reiterate the "bitter, barren hopelessness" of the country, which Judge Burlap proclaims to be "hell on earth" (34). As evening falls, the party guests eventually make their way down a stair-case like a "death trap" (45) to a patio like "the bottom of some dusky, flowering garden down in Hades" (46). Though the garden is lovely, a sense of "doom and despair" (36), of the "foulness that lies at the bottom" (37), and "an irritation amounting almost to rabies" (34) permeates the atmosphere. When Owen and Kate leave what they agree to have been a "ghastly tea party" (49), the chauffeur drives off "like a devil incarnate" (49), heading "full speed to Hell" (48). Kate, in other words, is being abducted in Pluto's chariot, and very appropriately a sense of infernal doom and demonism shadows her descent. Yet she experiences the appeal of the underworld right before the abduction, as Persephone herself must have done: she is strangely attracted by "a certain sympathy" to the "dark-faced silent men in their big straw hats" who look like "columns of dark blood" (48). The very hopelessness of hell seems to offer her promise, here of a distinctly erotic nature.

Furthermore, the appeal of the "handsome natives" combines eros and thanatos, as in the myth of Persephone's abduction: "they were death worshippers, Moloch worshippers Their pure acknowledgement of death, and their undaunted admission of nothingness kept them so erect and careless" (84). The language here connects the underworld with phallic potency, a point Lawrence makes more explicitly in *Apocalypse* (138). Though Kate cannot escape the "depression" everywhere present, it exerts a "lingering dread and fascination" upon her (85), possibly because she finds in this "dark-fingered quietness of death" (85) a sense of "soul" which white men have lost (84). It is as if she were caressed by Hades, who holds out the promise of recovered soul, in return for the dreadful doom she must endure in every beat of the sun's dark heart upon the parched soil of her life in Mexico. Having "heard the *consummation est* of her own spirit ... a kind of death agony" (52) accompanying the death of her husband Leslie and the passage of her fortieth birthday, she is ready for that movement away from the normal concerns of life into the domain of the underworld which Hillman calls soul-making.

Reading one morning about the return of the Gods of Antiquity to Mexico (58), Kate decides to sever her ties with her escorts, and to make the journey down to the Lake in Chapter 5: "She was forty, and in the rare, lingering

dawn of maturity, the flower of her soul was opening. Above all things she must preserve herself from worldly contacts. Only she wanted the silence of other unfolded souls around her, like a perfume" (62). Kate's journey through Hades, then, is impelled by her midlife separation from the demands of maternal and marital duties, and unites the dual concerns for soul and the imageries of ancient myth which are the pivotal foci of an archetypal poetics. Kate feels the pull downward through depression and rage to that demonic doom (her inferno) which, paradoxically, holds within it the seeds of her destiny (her granary). So she accepts the invitation of Don Ramon to move to Sayula, and leaves the city on a night train journey through a rural Mexico described as "a sort of demon world" (93) inhabited by "sombre ghosts" (91) who wander through "a quiet inferno" (93).

When Kate next crosses the lake by boat, the allusions to the underworld become an important sub-text: crossing the lake (a conventional mode of transport to the underworld), a native wading in the water stops the boat and demands "a tribute to Quetzalcoatl" (98). He is a sort of Charon figure, analogous to the illicit gondolier in *Death in Venice*, who appears at a similar moment. Persephone's fruit (the pomegranate) is mentioned twice (197, 201), Don Ramon's voice during a ritual is described as coming to Kate as if "a mysterious presence had entered unseen from the underworld" (216), and Kate continues to fear the "great downhill rush back to old underworld levels" that the murderous rabble of Mexico evokes (149).

This negative pole of the myth is continually activated by the many references to devils and demons, murder lust, cruelty, apathy, empty silence and dread, and the pervasive threat of evil in the narrative. This Conradian vision of Mexico as hell climaxes in the attack on Jamiltepec, which leaves several men dead, Don Ramon seriously wounded, and Kate "like a corpse" and feeling that the attack "had blown all their souls into the twilight of death" (337). When she recovers, she has "the face of one waking from the dead" (343), so that the myth of the descent to the underworld is enacted quite literally in this section.

After this experience, the erotic and more positive aspects of the underworld are emphasized, primarily in the figure of Cipriano and in Kate's response to him. He takes her down the lake to Jaramay, a little Mexican town described very much in underworldly terms: it is "hot as a lava oven" with a "broken, long dilapidated street" and "a dog leading a blind man along the little black walls, on the broken pavement" (351). Cipriano rules this little kingdom of "unspeakable lifelessness, emptiness" (351); like Hades, he emits "dark rays of dangerous power" and abducts Kate on his horse. Kate, taken to a completely darkened room, relinquishes her will, "fainting" into a "half-conscious" state (350). Like Persephone, she becomes the "esposa" to this living lord of the underworld, and afterwards she melts down "into a molten unconsciousness like a lake of still fire, unconscious of everything save the eternality of the fire in which she was gone" (351). Cipriano becomes "the

master of fire" (351), like Satan lying with Kate on the darkness of Milton's burning lake.

Kate then realizes she is to become a goddess (354), an appropriate development in line with Persephone's similar fate. She is to appear "on the day of flowers ... in a green dress ... with blue flowers at the seam" (Lawrence will later pick up the image of the blue flowers as an emblem of Persephone in his poem "Bavarian Gentians") and a "new moon of flowers" on her head (355). Cipriano subsequently refers to her as "another flower opened in the garden of Quetzalcoatl" (360), so that Kate's identification with Persephone as the goddess returning from the underworld is well established, and balances her susceptibility to the "deep and living darkness" (386) offered her as Cipriano's "esposa".

But Kate, also like Persephone, continues to resist complete submission to Cipriano and Ramon, mocking her apotheosis and asserting her right to egocentric individuality. She vacillates between being Kate and Malintzi, between ego and archetypal identity, between Persephone above and below. Even after she legally marries Cipriano, she makes plans to "sail away, alone, to Ireland" (462). Like Persephone (and like Ursula in *The Rainbow*), she will eventually leave her lord of the depths, who can make "her go all vague and quiet, as if she sank away, heavy and still, away from the surface of life, and lay deep in the underlife" (462). She plans to escape the "unwavering deeps" (462) of the "subterranean" Cipriano (463), who, with the "half-ghostly, dark invisibility of the Indian" (465) rules this underworld from his red horse.

In her desire to return to "her mother, her children, England, her whole past" where she can be "an individual and her own mistress" (470), Kate enacts Persephone's longing to return to the happy fields of Demeter, and to be reunited with her goddess-mother: "It felt so safe, so familiar, so normal, the thought of Christmas at home, in England, with her mother" (471). It is exactly this maternal world of domestic concerns that Demeter symbolizes and which Persephone loses in her descent to the underworld. Lawrence, then, very clearly follows this aspect of the myth, depicting Kate as a Persephone who "must have both" worlds (482), who accepts the submission to the impersonal depths of soul, yet who returns periodically to the demands of domesticity and individuality. Predictably, then, Cipriano and Ramon impede her departure with latent disapproval: like Hades, they attempt to keep their prize in the underworld, so that Kate's last words are "You won't let me go!" (487).

3.4 Poems

Kate's pulling back from an absolute commitment to Cipriano and Ramon can be seen as symbolizing Lawrence's own ambivalence about the complete submersion in the sea of myth. Joyce drowned in that sea, and as a result left the world an essentially unreadable masterpiece. Virginia Woolf's mythopoetic *The Waves* lacks the immediacy of impact of her great earlier

works, *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. And Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* is a rather overwrought departure from the naturalistic modes that nearly always give ballast to his interest in myth. In Kate's yearning to return to Europe, therefore, one can see Lawrence's surefooted aesthetic instinct, which compelled him to return to the commonplace realities of normal life, though enriched, like Persephone, by his immersion in the healing waters of the underworld.

Yet faced with the equally certain necessities of the soul, in confrontation with the imminence of death, Lawrence again turned towards the darkness of the underworld, as he had previously in the volume called *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers*. In *Last Poems*, two ("Bavarian Gentians" and "Ship of Death") are explicitly concerned with the descent to the underworld, even though both imply an ultimate return to life as well. The first, "Bavarian Gentians", is one of the few works in which Persephone is named, in comparison to so many works in which her presence is implicit, buried as subtext. Even when Lawrence, in *Apocalypse*, names "Pluto and the spirit of Hades" as the gods living in *Wuthering Heights*, he doesn't mention Persephone (118). It is almost as if, in refusing to name her Lawrence reveals a superstitious reluctance to identify the secret maternal muse of his life and work. At any rate, he does not do so until death is imminent: "Bavarian Gentians" was probably written some six months before he died (Pinto 18), during the month of September--Lawrence's natal month and the month in the Greek calendar (Boedromion) when the Eleusinian mysteries celebrating Persephone's abduction to Hades were performed (Meyer 17).

The intensity of the poem reflects this ritualistic quality. Repeated words (like "dark" and its derivatives, which occur 18 times in this 19 line poem) and thick alliterative resonance (b's, d's, and p's) serve a sort of incantatory function, which works with the imagery to take the reader under with the poet. Its emphasis is on the "black lamps from the halls of Dis, burning dark blue", and on the dark blue gentians, which give off a "blue darkness" like light. This imagery expresses Lawrence's fundamental theme, informing all his work, of the richness of the light that comes from darkness, which permeates and sustains the mystery of being. Persephone is the primary symbol of this "darkness invisible enfolded in the deeper dark / of the arms Plutonic". (The next poem, "Lucifer", reiterates the idea, imaging Lucifer as a ruby "In the dark-blue depths, under layers and layers of darkness glowing / with his 'own annunciation'".) Furthermore, that Lawrence compares the blue flowers to torches and that he places the descent in "frosted September" indicates his interest in the Eleusinian mysteries, during which torches were carried by initiates in the ritual descent to the underworld in September.

"Ship of Death" was apparently written around the same time as "Bavarian Gentians", as it begins with "autumn and the falling fruit / and the long journey towards oblivion". It narrates the complete version of the underworld journey, complete with death and return. Beginning with a sense of wounding

and collapse, in the image of "apples falling like great drops of dew / to bruise themselves an exit from themselves", the poem journeys on its ship of death onto "the flood's black waste / upon the waters of the end". In an echo of Noah's flood in *The Rainbow*, the soul, having "fallen, bruised, badly bruised ... through the exit / of the cruel bruise" into the oblivion of the "deepening black darkening still / black upon the soundless ungurgling flood / darkness at one with darkness", begins to return to life "beneath the deathly ashy grey / of a flood-dawn". Then, "the flood subsides, and the body, like a worn sea-shell / emerges strange and lovely", and "the little ship wings home". Here the roscate promise of the rainbow after the flood is echoed by the dawn and the pink sea shell body itself.

Hence the poem picks up the principal motifs of the descent to the underworld used previously by Lawrence in longer works: the image of wounding, falling into the darkness, flood waters and ship, and the rosy pink glow of dawning renewal. "Ship of Death" recapitulates all these earlier themes, organized by the descent to the underworld, reminding us how consistently Lawrence's imagination expressed itself according to the system of symbolic imagery I have called the Persephone complex. Her myth was so good for him because it embraced all the oppositions in his nature; for the underworld was, for him, alternately the hell of egocentrism and the mechanical world of demonic power that ego reflects, and the rich underworld of being as well, into which we all descend, periodically, for the ritual of death and transfiguration.

3.5 Apocalypse

In Lawrence's last book, completed two months before his death, the theme of the descent to the underworld emerges in its most explicit fashion. Lawrence argues that behind the imagery of the Book of Revelations (for a new edition of which his essay was to serve as introduction) is a pagan subtext, an ancient book of mysteries describing an initiatory descent to the underworld. Lawrence's discussion revolves around key aspects of an archetypal poetics: the power of symbolic images, the transformation of consciousness, a renewal of being leading to a resurrection in the flesh, and the recovery of a vital connection to the potency of the cosmos (*anima mundi*). Furthermore, by the end of the essay, one begins to see that Lawrence is also revealing the fundamental dynamic of his own opus, i.e., that it shares with the Book of Revelations the apocalyptic subtext of the Mediterranean mysteries, the descent to the underworld.

To begin with, Lawrence notes that the Jesus who appears to John of Patmos is essentially Hermes:

He holds the keys that unlock death and Hades. He is Lord of the Underworld. He is Hermes, the guide of souls through the death-world, over the hellish stream. He is master of the mysteries of the dead, he knows the meaning of the holocaust, and has final power over the powers below (20).

This Jesus antedates modern Christianity, which is "cut off from the cosmos, cut off from Hades", and reanimates "the whole great adventure of the human soul, as contrasted with the little petty personal adventure of modern Protestantism and Catholicism alike" (21). Lawrence's emphasis on soul here, as opposed to personalism, anticipates Hillman's opposition of ego and psyche in a very precise way. Furthermore, his complaint that the Jews violate the cyclical design of symbolic imagery in the Book of Revelations by imposing ethical or tribal meanings onto its narrative follows Hillman's objection to interpretations of dream imagery that make the dream useful to ego, as opposed to revelatory of soul. As Lawrence writes, such "explanations are our doom" (54).

Behind the allegories of Judeo-Christian moralism, Lawrence continues, are "ancient archaic books of the Aegean civilization: some sort of a book of a pagan mystery" (29) which is based on imagistic, symbolic thinking (33) about "the great dynamic God, neither spiritual nor moral, but cosmic and vital" (31). The oldest part of the Book of Revelations, he adds, "surely was a pagan work, probably the description of the 'secret' ritual of initiation into one of the pagan Mysteries, Artemis, Cybele, even Orphic" (34). Lawrence asserts the value of the vitalistic organic philosophy of these mysteries, against Judeo-Christian and contemporary denial and suppression, which sees them as illustrations of "Urdummheit" (36).

Lawrence then stipulates that the central archaic meaning of the pagan books of mystery upon which he argues Revelations is based is the initiatory descent to Hades: the whole book, he asserts, is a "pagan record of initiation," and the "cosmic calamity" succeeding the opening of the seventh seal "no doubt corresponds to the original final death of the initiate, when his very spirit is stripped off him and he knows death indeed, yet still keeps the final flame-point of life, down in Hades" (58). Then the initiate "emerges from hell...with golden thighs and a face of glory" (58). These initiatory rituals, Lawrence continues, may originally have occurred "in a temple of Cybele" or Isis (60), but, he complains, "Jewish and Christian apocalyptists abolish the mystery of the individual adventure into Hades" because they hate "the mortal and terrestrial divinity of man" (57).

In the second cycle of apocalyptic annihilation the action of Revelations "moves to the underworld of the cosmos instead of the underworld of the self" (62), and with each sounding of the trumpet, the whole cosmos becomes increasingly maleficent (and malign). After the Fourth Trump "a star falls to earth" representing "an angel" who "has the key of the abyss--Jewish counterpart of Hades" (62). The abyss becomes hell as a result of repression, since life potencies denied expression by the Judeo-Christian ethos turn vengeful. Behind the allegorical renunciations of Revelations, however, Lawrence sees the older pagan symbolism of the initiatory descent to the underworld, which he describes in detail as follows:

It is now all Jewish and allegorical, not symbolical anymore. The sun and moon are darkened because we are in the underworld. The abyss, like the underworld, is full of malefic powers, injurious to man.

For the abyss, like the underworld, represents the superseded powers of creation.

The old nature of man must yield and give way to a new nature. In yielding, it passes away down into Hades, and there lives on, undying and malefic, superseded, yet malevolent-potent in the underworld.

This very profound truth was embodied in all old religions, and lies at the root of the worship of the underworld powers. The worship of the underworld powers, the chthonoi, was perhaps the very basis of the most ancient Greek religion. When man has neither the strength to subdue his underworld powers--which are really the ancient powers of his old, superseded self; nor the wit to placate them with sacrifice and the burnt holocaust; then they come back at him, and destroy him again. Hence every new conquest of life means a 'harrowing of hell.'" (62)

After the Sixth Trump come the two witnesses, who Lawrence associates with the "very old cult" of the twins, who "lived alternately in Heaven and

Hades, witnessing to both poles. And as such they may be the candlesticks, or stars of heaven, on the one hand, and the olive trees of the underworld, on the other" (69). These old myths, Lawrence suggests, take us beyond allegory, carrying "the unconscious mind back in great cyclic swoops through eons of time" (70). And after the sounding of the Seventh Trump and the catastrophic earthquake, the most ancient of archetypal images emerge: the dragon and the Scarlet Woman, who, though glossed by the clergy as Satan and Papacy, actually represent, according to Lawrence, the "great sun-goddess ... Magna Mater" (75). She hearkens back to "the days when matriarchy was still the natural order of the obscure nations" and she brings "into the Bible what it lacked before: the great cosmic Mother robed and splendid, but persecuted" (75). He suggests that this "great vision of the Scarlet Woman, which has been borrowed from the pagans ... is the reversal of the great woman clothed in the sun" whom the apocalyptists revile rather than revere (76).

The narration of Revelations, then, as set forth here by Lawrence, follows the movement from rape to revelation associated with the descent to the underworld. After the inferno, the mythic seeds of Pluto's granary are revealed. That is to say, the great primordial images emerge after apocalypse: when things fall apart, the fundamental dynamic of soul making is revealed in the vestments of its informing ideas, here the Great Goddess, Magna Mater (Lawrence's own entelechy). The whole book, Lawrence suggests, is a revisioning of "a book of her 'mystery' and initiation ritual which gave rise to the existing apocalypse," though now "written over and over, till only a glimpse is left of her" (77).

Lawrence's association of the ancient mysteries of the Mother Goddess cults, therefore, with the descent to the underworld, in this last book he ever wrote, reveals the myth he lived and worked by. *Apocalypse* describes his Persephone complex in a more explicit fashion than any other work. Furthermore, his suggestion (in one of the fragments not published in the original edition) that "every real work of art is religious in its quality" (118), and his identification of specific mythic figures who inform different novels is very much in line with the principles of an archetypal poetics. He writes, for example, that "the religious experience one gets from Dickens belongs to Baal or Ashtaroth ... and in *Wuthering Heights* we feel the peculiar presence of Pluto and the spirit of Hades" (118).

It seems in fact that Hades engages Lawrence's ultimate concern, both in his own work and in this very revealing treatise on the Book of Revelations. For behind all the mysteries which inform the book, Lawrence sees primarily the descent to the underworld. The mysteries, he writes,

were first and foremost the ritual in which a man experienced death, and went through the dark horror of Hades, to rise again in a new body, with a new consciousness and a new glory, god-like In Greece it was the Orphic mystery, the mysteries of Dionysos, Iacchos,

the Eleusinian mystery: in Egypt it was the mystery of Osiris and Isis: in the near East, the mysteries of Tammuz, the mysteries of Attis: and in Persia, the mystery of Mithras. (134)

References to all of these figures in Lawrence's works activate the resonance of the descent to the underworld: in *The Plumed Serpent*, explicit allusions to Orpheus and the Mithraic bull sacrifice occur in the first chapter, and to Dionysos in the last; *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, and *Women in Love* allude to Demeter, Persephone, Hades, and Cybele; and the mysteries of Isis and Osiris are conflated with the Christian return from the underworld in "The Man Who Died". What unifies all these myths, as Lawrence himself suggests in this last book, is the descent to the underworld, a myth the centrality of which in his life and work he acknowledged as early as 1917, in this letter to Cecil Gray:

It seems to me there is a whole world of knowledge to forsake, a new, deeper, lower one to *entamer*. And your hatred of me, like Frieda's hatred of me, is your cleavage to a world of knowledge and being you ought to forsake, which, by organic law, you must depart from or die. And my "women," Esther Andrews, Hilda Aldington, etc. represent, in an impure and unproud, subservient, cringing, bad fashion, I admit--but represent none the less the threshold of a new world, or underworld, of knowledge and being. And the Hebridean songs, which represent you and Frieda in this, are songs of the damned: that is, songs of those who inhabit an underworld which is forever an underworld, never to be made open and whole. And you would like us all to inhabit a suggestive underworld which is never revealed or opened, only intimated, only *felt* between the initiated.-- I won't have it. The old world must burst, the underworld must be open and whole, new world. You want an emotional sensuous underworld, like Frieda and the Hebrideans: my "women" want an ecstatic subtly-intellectual underworld, like the Greeks--Orphic--like Magdalene at her feet-washing--and there you are. (qtd. Robinson 108)

Furthermore, Lawrence delineates the fundamental meaning of the descent to the underworld in all his work when he argues that the cults of the dying gods, particularly the Orphic mysteries, reflect a need to escape "the old way of consciousness" through death and to be "resurrected in a new self" (133). This conception indicates his view of the underworld as a *temenos*, where the sacred rites of the imaginal are performed. For Lawrence, underworld equals transformed being; the "transit through Hades" restores phallic potency through "a death of consciousness" leading to a recreated union of spirit and body (138). In the old mysteries, as in his "modern" novels, character, reader, and writer undergo "a passage through the underworld of the dead, in which the spirit or consciousness" achieves death, then moves to a "sudden emergence into life again, when a new body, like a babe is born, and a new spirit

emerges" (139). The babe is both the child dancing in flames at the end of "Anna Victrix," the reader, the writer, the world restored to a sense of soul, and the book itself, Lawrence's opus of soul making. The underworld is alternately the inferno of egocentrism, the temenos of transfiguration, and the granary where all the secrets are stored.

Notes

¹ George Ford has pointed out the importance of Persephone in *Sons and Lovers*, Margerie Perloff in the poems, Sandra Gilbert in the poems and stories, and Gregory Lucente (who suggests that Persephone was one of his favorite myths (110)) in *Women in Love* and the essays. One should also note the frequent use of the word "underworld" in "Pornography and Obscenity".

² See James Hillman, "The Thought of the Heart", for a discussion of the notion of *aisthesis* as the direct presentation of soul on the face of things in the world.

³ The emphasis on the idea of fate in this passage corroborates Jung's delineation of the characteristics of what he calls the mother archetype, which "on the negative side may connote anything that is terrifying and inescapable like fate" (*Four Archetypes* 16). That Tom experiences Lydia here, with some dread, as fate, is also appropriate as an epiphany of the goddess, who in classical myth presided over destiny. "on the negative side may connote anything that is terrifying and inescapable like fate" (*Four Archetypes* 16).

⁴ His is an ambivalent yearning for the underworld which Freud would call the death instinct, and Hillman would identify as natural to the soul's longing to reside in its proper home: "This autochthonous urge of the psyche, its native desire to understand psychologically, would seem to be akin to what Freud calls the death drive and what Plato presented (*Cratylus*, 403c) as the desire for Hades" (Hillman, *Dream* 27).

⁵ This commingling of Biblical and Classical myths suggests that Lawrence was an early comparative mythologist of the Frazerian type who, like Jung, was interested in the psychodynamics of marriage and individuation, for which the myths provided such precise vocabularies of description. In *The Psychology of the Transference*, for example, Jung uses alchemy as the paradigm most usefull for describing the process of individuation at work in therapy and marriage. In alchemy, as in the myths of Persephone and Noah, the achievement of wholeness is symbolized by a process of creative dissolution which leads to a sacred, symbolic marriage.

⁶ Lawrence weaves other patterns into this portrayal of the Persephone-Hades opposition, with allusions to Eve and the serpent (the Biblical

Lord of the Underworld), and to the fairytale, "Beauty and the Beast." Will is seen "coiled like a beast, hidden under the darkness" (185). In each metaphor, Will as Hades struggles aggressively, cruelly, to "drag her down, and kill her spirit" (185).

⁷ This close connection between daughter and father suggests a kind of incestuous motif. The myth itself corroborates this intuition: Ursula as Persephone mates with and remains primarily attached to her father. Karl Kerényi substantiates this notion, citing "the tale that Zeus mated with Persephone's mother--and later with Persephone herself, his own daughter" (*Gods* 252). Hillman also notes that Hades was a subterranean form of Zeus (*Zeus chthonios*), so that even in this detail Lawrence spontaneously adheres to the mythic paradigm informing the operations of his poetic imagination. The incest theme is reiterated subtly by Lawrence, who earlier has Anna and Will exchange kisses in the same barn Anna had been brought to as a child with her father Tom.

⁸ As Hillman points out in *The Dream and the Underworld*, night (32f.) and water (151-153) are the quintessential elements connecting reverie with the underworld, just as fire is the traditional element of the underworld. In so doing, he follows Gaston Bachelard, who also approached the imagination via its "elements." The elements activated by this descent are fire and water, so pervasive in Lawrence's imagery that Frieda Lawrence referred to them when she said that Lawrence himself was like one of the elements.

⁹ Hillman connects of ash and salt, as alchemical elements, in his discussion of this scene ("Salt" 134-135).

¹⁰ Other critics have focused on the moral scheme implied by the use of myth in the novel (Lucente), on the philosophical use of myth (Foster), on structure, theme, and characterization in literary history (Merivale), on Lawrence's ambivalent celebration of the power of the Great Goddess (Gilbert), and on the nature of identity (Langbaum). A comprehensive discussion of the use of myth in the novel must consider all these factors, while keeping a focus on Persephone and the descent to the underworld, towards which the text itself points us.

¹¹ This calls into question Lucente's assertion that the myths do not openly lead the narrative. On the contrary, the allusions to myth in the novel inform its every aspect, from episode to style to digressive narratorial soliloquy to theme and structure. Lucente's point would be more applicable to a novel that followed the lines of the traditional plot, which could indeed be led somewhere. But *Women in Love* conforms more to the pattern of a grouping of poems by Yeats, or to a novel by Woolf, where the individual poems or events are organized not by plot, but by substratums of metaphorical association. And here it is the myth of the descent to the underworld, with its constellation of archetypal images, that harmonizes the novel, giving it coherence and

significance in each of its parts.

Chapter 4

Thomas Mann and the "Cult of the Sepulchre"

4.1 Early Works: *Buddenbrooks* and *Death in Venice*

Thomas Mann's preoccupation with the relationship between creativity and illness is evident throughout his work. As Henry Hatfield notes, the artist figures in Mann are "generally threatened by illness and work at the edge of exhaustion" (Mann 7). The dualism between spirit (art, death, illness, eros) and waking life in his work corresponds to Persephone in the underworld, and Persephone at play in the fields of Demeter. These same antipodes are the basis of the concept of the hermetic function of the artist, who mediates between spirit (informing idea, the *eidolon*) and phenomenon (Mann, *Essays* 376), so that Mann's notion of the daemonic aspects of genius can be seen as a free movement between ego and the archetypal structures of the imaginal presided over by Hades. Karl Kerényi chooses Hermes to personify this "fundamental gestalt" in Mann (*Mythology* 12), and in what follows I will develop his concept of the "entelechy" in Mann's life, works, and development, with a focus on the descent to the underworld.

The first explicit allusion to the underworld comes at a time when Freud was completing his own account of a private descent to the underworld (*Traumdeutung*). In "The Wardrobe" (1899), the dying Albrecht van der Qualen sets out on a journey. In an unknown city, he crosses a bridge in a dream like state and sees below him "a long, decaying skiff" propelled by a man in the stern (*Stories* 73). Hatfield identifies this figure as Charon (Mann 21), whose appearance at the river crossing marks the descent into the underworld. In "The Way to the Churchyard" (1901), a man named Piepsan collapses while on a bicycle trip to visit the graves of his family, a plot similarly based on the journey to the kingdom of the dead. "Tristan" (1902) develops the "love-death" theme of "passion, music, and the night arrayed against rationality and light" (Hatfield, Mann 24); this is a characteristic dimension of the mythic descent to the underworld, with its confrontation of Hades (death, eros, and the archetypal *eidola* of the unconscious) and Persephone (life, materialism, and domestic innocence). Indeed, Spinell's seduction of Frau Kloterjahn, through the sublimated

sexuality of music, and her subsequent death, can be seen as a variation of the abduction of Persephone: through illness, sex, and death, the aesthetic depths of soul are revealed, here in the archetypal story of Tristan and Isolde.

Buddenbrooks (1901) continues the preoccupation with death, a theme with the force of an "uncanny fascination" for Mann (Hatfield, *Mann* 44). Its plot--the decline of the family as a result of nervous exhaustion and illness, and the ensuing influx of artistic elements--reflects the association of death and the imaginal. Indeed, the death of Mann's father in 1891, followed by the family's move to Munich, can be seen as one of the principal events catalyzing Mann's career. Like the deaths of Mrs. Lawrence, Mrs. Joyce, or Mrs. Stephen, the death of Senator Mann inaugurated an artistic career, and is recorded in a major work. For all four writers, doom lead to the revelation of imaginal powers, a movement out of life (Lubeck, Eastwood, Dublin) and into soul (Munich, Germany, Trieste).

Hermes, the guide of souls to the underworld, is the archetypal figure presiding over this transition for Mann. In *Buddenbrooks*, the character who initiates the decline of the family, Herr Grünlich, is subtly and yet unmistakably associated with Hermes, who, as a god of the market place, is associated with theft, disguise, and trickery,¹ and Mann will later choose him in this role as the "dominant deity" of Felix Krull (Hatfield, *Masterpieces* 154). Grünlich first appears carrying a staff and wearing a "broad-brimmed grey hat" (78), a stranger interrupting the family's sabbath idyll in the garden: the wand, cap of invisibility, and the wandering stranger are all motifs associated with Hermes (Kerenyi, *Hermes*). Like Hermes, whose first act is the theft of Apollo's cattle, Grünlich uses disguise and trickery to filch Toni Buddenbrooks. Also like Hermes, who after stealing the cattle returns through the keyhole of his cavern home "like the autumn breeze in outer form, or airy mist" (Athanassakis 35), Grünlich is repeatedly imagined surrounded by mist in the novel: he interrupts Toni's seashore retreat at Travemünde, arriving in a late summer rainstorm during which "heaven, earth, and sea were in flood" (122); she is betrothed to him in early autumn (131), and the coach leaves for Hamburg after their marriage in a "snowy misty air" (135); and the crisis of Grünlich's bankruptcy is revealed on "a misty, snowy, morning" at the breakfast table in Hamburg, when "the panes of both windows were opaque with mist," and the terrace door looks out into "the whitish-grey mist beyond" (164).

This reiterated association of Grünlich and mist places him against the archetypal background of Hermes, as do the motifs of theft, trickery, the death of the family fortunes, and Thomas Buddenbrooks' illness, which enter the narrative at this point (Chapter VII, 175). Here Mann skillfully unites his diverse concerns (the decline of the family, illness, love and death, art) under the rubric of Hermes. Later, when Thomas discovers Schopenhauer in a crisis following the death of his father, the hermetic aura that unites death with the revelation of archetypal ideas is intensified: as the Buddenbrooks family declines, the aesthetic and philosophical dimensions of the spirit move into

the foreground. Christian returns from Valparaiso with his syphilis and love of the theatre, Thomas marries a sickly violinist, and little Hanno's musical talent conflicts with his father's wishes for him, precipitating his early death. The narrative follows the movement out of the secure life of commercial and social prestige (Demeter's fertility--a ruined crop of grain is the final death blow for Thomas) and into the aesthetic resources of the imaginal psyche (Persephone's underworld).

The years following the great success of *Buddenbrooks* were seriously darkened by two crucial trials for Mann: the publication of "The Blood of the Walsungs" (1905) was blocked, due to its potential use by the anti-semites, and its satirical, albeit subliminal attack of his wife's family (Hamilton); and, more profoundly, Mann's sister Carla committed suicide in 1910, a death which he says "shook me to my very depths" and to which he devotes four pages in the very brief *A Sketch of My Life* (37-42). Finding it difficult to "sustain the right tone for the Krull memoirs", Mann's "need for rest" interrupted his labors and led to the trip in the spring of 1911 which produced the material for *Death in Venice* (*A Sketch* 43).

Here again (as in the writing of Yeats's *A Vision* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*), personal crisis, exhaustion, death and collapse lead to a story suffused throughout with skillful revisionings of the descent to the underworld. It is as if Mann's daimon took over, producing that crisis in the life of the artist Yeats describes as necessary to the creation of his most profound achievement. And indeed, Mann experienced this novella as having that will of its own, organically shaping itself (*A Sketch* 44), which Kerenyi notes as characteristic of the activation of the entelechy (*Mythology* 18). Even the external details of the actual trip fell into the archetypal pattern of the descent to the underworld: Mann tells us that "The pilgrim at the North Cemetery ... the sinister gondolier ... the cholera ... were all there" (*A Sketch* 46).

Aschenbach's story represents these inner processes of soul, symbolized by the imagery of the *nekylia* presided over by Hermes. Hermes first appears in *Death in Venice* as the wandering pilgrim standing in the portico of a mortuary chapel in Munich's North Cemetery: he is the guide to the underworld, a psychopomp. Like Grünlich, his suit is yellowish, he wears a "broad, straight-brimmed hat," carries "an iron shod stick," is clearly traveling, and vanishes abruptly (4). From the beginning, Mann associates these hermetic attributes (travel, death, the caduceus like stick, the characteristic cap, and invisibility) with "fantasy ... psychical influence ... a widening of inward barriers" (5). The "suddenness and passion" of this epiphany is like an "hallucination" or a "seizure," an eruption of the unconscious in the form of the dream vision of primeval Venice which initiates his journey into the underworld (5).

To this cluster of motifs (death, visionary image, travel, and art) Mann

adds the idea of the repressed desires of the subconscious, modifying his depiction of what we might call the Hermes complex with the introduction of psychoanalytic concepts. The vision of the "primeval wilderness world" is "desire projected ... visually" (5). The repressed "primitive thoughts which are youth's inheritance ... had remained latent" (44), tyrannizing Aschenbach's feelings (7) and leading to the sense of stagnation and "over-refinement" (15) that precipitates his mid-life collapse (he is 50). Under these conditions, he longs for the "interim existence" of mid-life, which Murray Stein calls hermetic liminality (7).

But Aschenbach descends further into the underworld, going beyond the personal unconscious dominated by repressed wishes to the collective unconscious, the domain of archetypal images (the *eidola* of soul). Aschenbach reaches this region via two underworld crossings, in both of which he encounters striking Charon figures: the first is the goat-bearded man who looks like a circus director and takes the coin for the passage to Venice; and the second is the illicit gondolier who ferries him to the Lido in "a singular conveyance, come down unchanged from ballad times, black as nothing else on earth except a coffin" (21). Mann explicitly identifies this passage as a journey to the underworld, noting the "visions of death itself" evoked (21) and recording Aschenbach's fantasy of being hit by the oar and sent "down to the kingdom of Hades" (23).

Venice itself then becomes that kingdom of the dead and dying, the "labyrinth" (55) of disease and desire Aschenbach gets lost in following Tadzio, who Mann is delighted to hear Jung associate with the child-god Hermes (*Mythology* 101). But the kingdom of the dead is also within, a psychological realm of dream, reverie, and repressed desire activated by Tadzio. The outer descent into the hell of Venice is complemented by the ascent of material from that inner "region of the soul we have learned to call the unconscious" (Mann, *Essays* 412). This emphasis on the uncanny and "the dreamlike distortion of perspective" (18) culminates in the ferocious dream of Dionysian orgies (66-68), a visionary nightmare which suggests the overthrow of the rational faculties by the dark powers of the id, a process analogous to the abduction of Persephone.² This reversion to the primitive levels of the collective psyche goes beyond the purely personal contents of the "forgotten feelings" of Aschenbach's youth (49). It is a movement that parallels Jung, with whom Mann expresses a fundamental affiliation in a letter to Karl Kerényi (*Mythology* 101), and in "Freud and the Future" (1936), an essay which begins a discussion of the dialectic of ego and archetype with a reference to Jung's "significant introduction to the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*" (*Essays* 418). Mann was very much aware of the psychological aspects of the descent to the underworld, and *Death in Venice*, is one of several modernist revisionings of the ancient books of the dead.

The abduction by the suppressed powers of the personal and collective unconscious is, as in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, expressed throughout the

novella by frequent references to spells, fever, and dream. The messengers of soul are alternately Hermes (the pilgrim, the Italian liner ticket man, the gondolier, and Tadzio), Dionysus and Pan (the goat-bearded men, the lewd performer at the hotel, and the revelers in Aschenbach's dream), and Persephone (Aschenbach himself, who drinks pomegranate juice (Persephone's fruit) at the hotel (63) and eats plump overripe strawberries while pursuing Tadzio through the "labyrinthine little streets" (71) of Venice). Again, each one of these gods has chthonic aspects and initiates its own manner of descent to the underworld: the tricks, criminality, synchronicity, and dream voyages into death of Hermes; the orgiastic revelry of Dionysus and Pan; and Persephone's experience of being hopelessly captivated by the compelling powers of the depths are all combined in this classic modernist redaction of the descent to Hades. Written at a time of personal crisis for Mann, and under the shadow of the impending catastrophe of World War I, the novella combines, as well, the visions of the underworld as inferno (disease ridden Venice), granary (the archetypal imagery of dream and fantasy), and *temenos* (as we see Aschenbach transformed by his obsession with Tadzio from an Apollonian moralist to a lyric poet chanting the dithyrambs of Dionysus).

4.2 The Magic Mountain

Mann's ideas for *The Magic Mountain* began with another personal variation on the journey to the underworld. After two years of anxiety regarding his wife's health, Katja was taken in 1912 to Dr. Jensen's "Forest Sanatorium" in Davos. When Mann visited her, he suffered a fever and was diagnosed as tubercular. Katja remained at the sanatorium for six months (the length of Persephone's stay in the underworld) and returned to other sanatoriums in 1913 and again in 1914. Meanwhile, Mann was unable to finish *Felix Krull* or the short work he had begun based on his experiences in Davos that was to become, several years and a World War later, *The Magic Mountain*. He was "very melancholy and weighted down by cares" (qtd. in Hamilton: 152), which included his wife and son's health, and a huge mortgage on his new home (very similar to Conrad's circumstances when beginning *Heart of Darkness*: he too was ill, as was his son, oppressed by financial worries, and afflicted by writer's block). Mann complained of "the constant threat of exhaustion ... tiredness ... sensitivity and weakness that lay me open to every attack and leave me prostrate" (qtd. in Hamilton: 152).

These personal conditions coincided with World War I and led again to the creation of a work modeled on the descent to the underworld. As Henry Hatfield notes, the mountain itself "is of course the realm of death and can be equated with the underworld or the grave" (Mann 66). Indeed, *The Magic Mountain* is peppered with numerous allusions to the descent to the underworld, and, as such, is another of many Modernist redactions of the Homeric *nekya*.³ As we will see, Hermes, as mercurial trickster, master of dream and illusion, *psychopompos*, and patron of the arts of eloquence (messenger of the gods) is again the principal deity evoked. References to Hermes and various aspects of

hermeticism (mercury, medicine, alchemy, occultism) are implicit throughout the book, and made explicit in a passage from a conversation between Naphta and Settembrini where Hermes is referred to as "a god of death and of the dead, a soul-compeller and tutelary soul-guide" (524).

The novel begins with Naphta's sense of Hermes as "tutelary soul guide" to the land of the dead. Hans Castorp is afflicted by the debilitation which Ricardo Quinones calls the "modernist point of departure". His mother and father died before his seventh year, the family business collapsed, and Hans moved in with his Grandfather, who died shortly thereafter (Chapter II). Hans "stood three times by his Grandfather's bier" (28) and suffered the deaths of three elders during his youth, before living in modest happiness with his wife's uncle, Consul Tienappel. To this connection between the death of parents and aesthetic vocation (shared by Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot, and Woolf), Mann adds the idea of spiritual wounding, which he develops in terms similar to Joyce's notion of paralysis: Hans, in the face of "a hollow silence to all the questions man puts ... as to the final, absolute, and abstract meaning in all his efforts and activities," experiences "a certain laming of the personality ... a sort of palsy" which spreads "from his spiritual and moral over into his physical and organic part" (32; Chapter II).

This laming opens ego to its limitations and to the awareness of death which initiates psyche to its own depths: as Hillman notes, "Hans Castorp's lung with its *petite tache humide* makes him unable for life. He has to go and live it on *The Magic Mountain*, where, through the little hole of lung, the immense realm of spirit enters" ("Puer" 108). This laming theme is taken up immediately: when Hans arrives on the mountain after his departure from the flatland, he comments on a man who "limped noticeably" while fetching his luggage for the carriage ride to the Berghof (6). He is a kind of Charon and the first of many wounded figures in the book. It is dusk and bodies are being brought down through the snow on bob-sleds (9). The first guide we meet (Settembrini) asks Hans how many months "Minos and Rhadamanthus" (the classical judges of the underworld) have "knocked" him down for (57). He then compares Hans to "Odysseus in the kingdom of the shades ... bold indeed, thus to descend into these depths peopled by the vacant and idle dead" (57).

The psychoanalyst Krokowski next emerges as another guide to the underworld (of the Freudian unconscious). From the beginning, Mann makes it clear that "the underworld is psyche" (Jung qtd. in Hillman, *Dream*: 47): he has Hans succumb to drowsiness and fever, and an increased dream and fantasy life, symptoms which signal the drawing off of energy into the unconscious which Janet called *abaissement du niveau mental*.⁴ For Hans, this tendency initially produces the dream and trance vision of his schoolmate Pribislav Hippe (120-123), and later deepens towards the collective imagery of the "anonymous and communal" dream in "Snow" (491). Once again the image of the underworld modulates from inferno (the disease ridden sanatorium that Hans is initially repelled by) to granary (repository of archetypal imagery and ideas).

Furthermore, Mann's notion of "the hermetic pedagogy of transubstantiation" in the novel envisions the mountain as a *temenos*, "a variant of the shrine of the initiatory rites" (728).

As in *Death in Venice*, the analogies between the inner journey and the descent to Hades are signalled by mythological allusions which structure the entire narrative: those previously cited to Minos and Rhadamanthus, to Odysseus, and to Satan are explicit and well known. Less explicit, however, and not previously commented on by critics, is the Arthurian allusion (in the chapter called "Hippe") to Lancelot's rescue of Guinevere from the kingdom of death (from Chretien's "The Knight of the Cart"). The adventure begins on a morning when Hans resolves to escape the debilitating routine of bedrest and to take a walk up the mountain after breakfast. His first stream crossing, accompanied by a "sudden and pervading gloom" to which he falls "prey" after singing with forced joy, and the ensuing "memory of his dead grandfather" (118), indicate that Hans has crossed over into the underworld. The motif is reiterated when he takes a "left-hand path in the direction of the village" and crosses a footbridge over a "foaming, rushing waterfall" which roars "like music" as he lays down beside it to listen (119). Then his nose begins bleeding fiercely, and he succumbs to the dream of Hippe in the schoolyard, a vision of "the far distant past" (120).

After this period of "extraordinarily reduced vitality" (119), Hans attempts to return to the Berghof, and as a result of his weakened condition must avail himself of a passing wagon. He sits back to back with the driver with "his legs hanging down out of the end...regarded with surprise and sympathy by the passers-by" (124). Then he slips into the darkened room where Krokowski is lecturing on sexuality, illness, and death. Hans looks "ghastly," with "his face white as a sheet, his coat spotted with blood" as if he was "a murderer stealing from his crime" (125). He then finds himself sitting directly behind Clavdia (the femme fatale of the novel, whose allure keeps Hans in the underworld), who though enraptured by Krokowski looks back at Hans "with Pribislav's very eyes" (125).

The allusion here is subtle, but clues come in Mann's afterword, "The Making of *The Magic Mountain*". There he discusses Howard Nemerov's discussion of the "Holy Grail romances," whose hero, Mann writes, ranges "heaven and hell, makes terms with them, and strikes a pact with the unknown, with sickness and evil, with death and the other world" (727). The allusion in this particular scene is to Lancelot's journey to the kingdom of death to rescue Guinevere, during which he must, like Hans, follow a left hand path, cross a sword bridge over a rushing river, and accept an ignominious ride in a cart after losing his horse. Heinrich Zimmer shows that the cart ride in medieval times amounted to a public acknowledgement of shame and guilt (164). Hence, in *The Magic Mountain*, Hans is seen regarded with pity by the passers-by, with his legs dangling over the end of the cart (just as Lancelot is depicted in the illustrations of the scene). When he arrives at the lecture he looks like

a murderer fresh from his crime, and Clavdia (the Guinnevere of the episode) sits directly in front of him, captivated by the satanic Krokowski's lecture on illicit passions and death (just as the abducted members of Arthur's court are imprisoned by Meleagant in Chretien's romance).

Other implicit allusions in the chapter are to Orpheus and Christ. Hans goes singing up the mountain and falls into his dreamlike trance beside a waterfall which sounds "like music" (119). Then he attempts to retrieve his Eurydice (Clavdia) from the underworld, where she is captured by Hades (Krokowski). Krokowski, however, is also described as Christ on the Cross (130): as a harrower of hell, he brings the suppressed devils of the unconscious to light in an attempt to free sinners from the underworld of pathological complexes. The episode as a whole is typical of Mann and other Modernists who unite the various myths of the descent to the underworld (Greek, Christian, Arthurian, folkloric) and relate them to major themes: love and death, illness and the creative imagination, and the quest for soul in modern life. All are handled with that extraordinary psychological "talent" that Hatfield sees as Mann's "amazing and fundamentally inexplicable endowment" (Mann 16).

To this psychological and aesthetic function of the myth of the underworld, Mann later introduces religious and occult dimensions. We see this in the chapter called "Rescarch", which records Hans's efforts to uncover the origins of life in a relationship between spirit and matter; in Naphta's interest in "a cult of the sepulchre", the Isis cult, and the Eleusinian mysteries (512); and in the scene during which Joachim's departed spirit is summoned in "Highly Questionable." The high point of the novel, however, is the "dream poem of humanity" in "Snow," where, Mann tells us, "you will find out what the Grail is" (729). The excursion into the snowy mountains (Hermes is once again associated with mist) precipitates this dream by nearly killing Hans, a reiteration of the connection between collapse and the revelation of the archetypal images of soul. The journey away from the life attachments of the flatland, and into the regions of soul and spirit on the purgatorial mountain, reaches its peak in this revelation of archetypal ideas through the medium of the dream image. As in our discussion of Yeats's "The Second Coming," so here: after things fall apart, the *eidōs* of being manifests in the emergence of a powerful image out of *Spiritus mundi*.

In Hans Castorp's dream, the ancient image of the goddess devouring her children surfaces (Persephone as Hag), alongside her sunny, benign aspect (Persephone as Virgin): lovely youth stroll along the beautiful bay, with their enigmatic smiles acknowledging the "icy horror of human sacrifice" within the temple precincts (495). After passing a young mother suckling her infant, who receives reverential gestures of worship from the young men who walk by, Hans dreams of a boy who smilingly directs his attention to the temple. Inside a deep forest of columns Hans comes upon

two females carved in stone on a high base: a mother and daughter

it seemed; one of them sitting, older than the other, more dignified, right goddesslike and mild, yet with mourning brows above the lightless empty eye-sockets; clad in a flowing tunic and a mantle of many folds, her matronly brow with its waves of hair covered with a veil. The other figure stood in the protecting embrace of the first, with round, youthful face, and arms and hands wound and hidden in the folds of the mantle. (494)

Mann clearly intends us to recognize Demeter and Persephone in this portrait, and to see the mysteries of the Eleusinian descent to the underworld behind this dream vision. He cannot resist revealing his view of the secret mysteries:

Two grey old women, witchlike, with hanging breasts and dug of finger length, were busy there, between flaming braziers, most horribly. They were dismembering a child. In dreadful silence they tore it apart with their bare hands--Hans Castorp saw the bright hair blood-smearred--and cracked the tender bones between their jaws, their dreadful lips dripped blood. (494)

Hans is terrified into wakefulness by the "dreadful whispered brawling" of the hags interrupted at their sacrificial meal.

It is an archetypal vision of the Great Mother, shared by Lawrence (Ursula and Gudrun), Joyce (Anna Livia Plurabelle), Conrad (the jungle's fertility balanced by its seductive and fatal horror), and Eliot (the Lady with the leopards in "Ash Wednesday"). Mann emphasizes the collective, transpersonal dimension of this dream vision when he has Hans soliloquize: "Now I know that it is not out of our single souls we dream. We dream anonymously and communally, if each after his fashion. The great soul of which we are a part may dream through us, in our manner of dreaming, its own secret dreams" (495). The emphasis here on the "anonymous and communal" aspects of the dream parallels Jung's focus on the collective and impersonal levels of the psyche (what I have designated as the granary of the underworld), and the notion that the soul dreams through us indicates the autonomy of the imaginal, as a factor functioning independently of the ego.

In this "dream poem of humanity" (496), the underworld reveals its Queen. Through the pathological collapse of ego, the primacy of soul as the source of poetic images is revealed. The revelation is of the soul as "the giver of all given conditions" (Mann *Essays* 426). It is an insight Mann derives directly from Jung, whose essay on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* Mann quotes as the basis of this concept of soul and the lived myth (*Essays* 418-419). This is another explicit confirmation of Mann's interest in the myth of the descent to the underworld, since the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, he writes, concerns the "knowledge ... one gives to the deceased to accompany him on his way" (420).⁵ Furthermore, this knowledge is of man as "the maker of his own conditions," so that even the gods are among the "given conditions" originating

from the soul" (419). In other words, the gods are the mythic constructions of soul, the fundamental aspect of which is the spontaneous production of those symbolic images which determine our destiny and character. These images are the myths we live by, the *eidola* or entelechies of being, revealed during the descent to the underworld.

4.3 Joseph and His Brothers and Doctor Faustus

This explicit convergence of pathology, dream, archetypal image, and art, structured according to the descent to the underworld and the discovery of soul, is the principal leit-motif in Mann's work. It is his "entelechy", which Kerenyi calls the "fundamental gestalt" shaping individual works and his overall development (*Mythology* 11). It recurs in *Joseph and His Brothers*, in which the well into which Joseph is thrown becomes the pit, the grave, and the underworld. As a symbol of the past, the subconscious, death, and the womb, the underworld is "one of the most important leit-motifs of the novel" (Hatfield, *Mann* 101). Egypt is the underworld as well, and Joseph's exile re-enacts Jacob's journey into Mesopotamia, which has also been identified as a descent into the underworld (Hatfield, *Mann* 103-107; Campbell, "Thomas Mann").

Mann's dream poem of the underworld comes in the "Prelude" to the *Joseph* novels, called "Descent into Hell", an overture which sounds all the major themes to be taken up in the novels. There the underworld is that bottomless well, the "lower world of the past" (3), into which the storyteller descends. It contains the "alpha and omega of all our questions" and is the place where "the significance to all our striving" is situated (3). That is to say, the descent to the underworld is intimately related to the search for those patterns shaping our existence which are revealed through stories about the patriarchs. Joseph attempts to trace "his own spiritual and physical being" (7) back to this community of the ancestral dead, and particularly to the "brooding and unquiet man" (8) who led his people out of Ur-Kashdim. He is the Ur-man representative of all the forefathers whose exodus from Ur-Chalde was the prototype of the "tradition of spiritual unrest" (30) which defines Joseph's people. This mythical ancestor receives the promise of destiny (7) from God, who germinates the "seed" (6) of life governing the future history of all the Jews. That is to say, the patterns governing life (here imagined as seeds stored in the granary) are revealed by the descent, through storytelling and tradition, into the underworld of the past.

But this journey into the lower world reveals more than the archetypal origins of Joseph and his race. The underworld is imagined as a cornucopia of germinal origins, for it contains the mythic origins "of the world and the heavens and the earthly universe" (9), the "beginnings of humanity...deep down in the darkness at the bottom of the abyss" (9-10), and those "prototypes" upon which all subsequent sacred stories are based--the Great Flood (16-19), the Great Tower (19-20), Paradise (20-23) and the Fall (27-30), the first man and the human soul (23-27). In addition, the origins of writing, monumental

architecture, husbandry, agriculture, viniculture, civilization, and language are touched on along the way down. Mann calls these seed forms of the imaginal "soul memories" (21), a phrase retaining the sacred connotations of Platonic *memoria* (see Hillman, *Myth* 171f.). The journey downward goes beyond the first man "made out of pure light, formed before the beginning of the world as prototype and abstract of humanity" (23), to the soul itself, the "primevally human" (24) whose descent into the lower world of matter brought about the creation (24-27).

With this reversion to the soul as the first principle, Mann reaches the only bottom of the well accessible to the human imagination, which is itself as bottomless as any weaver's dream. The soul resides in "the remotest human past" as the "pure and original form" of Paradise, the Fall, and of knowledge and death: "the original human soul is the oldest thing," Mann writes, "more correctly an oldest thing, for it has always been, before time and before form, just as God has always been and likewise matter" (25). This descent into hell, then, reveals the original pattern of all things, the archetypal basis of created life, in an *imaginal* event, which is itself a prototypical descent into the underworld. For the first *nekyia* was the soul's descent into matter, upon which it imposed the imagined forms of its desire, from which all subsequent life was created. The second *nekyia* was of the messianic spirit, which came down into the lower world to rescue soul by reminding it of its origins (27).

Mann's "romance of the soul" reminds one of Hugh Kenner's suggestion that the *nekyia* is "perhaps the oldest pattern" of literary works (149). For, as Mann's narrator informs us, from the perspective of the soul's descent into the underworld of matter, the story of the Fall of man is "a secondary and already earthly event" concerning "human beings who had with God's own creative aid been generated out of the knowledge of matter by the soul" (27). This brings us very close to Hillman's understanding of the soul as the first principle of consciousness, and to his notion of the essentially poetic or creative nature of soul, which spontaneously generates what Mann calls "the world of form and death" (27).

For the characteristic activity of the soul is that "flow of fantasy" which Mann identifies as "the decisive ingredient" in Joseph's "mental inheritance" (31). The underworld springs of this flow of fantasy arise from those depths of hell into which Mann the narrator fears he must descend (32). He sees the underworld as "the storyteller's element and native air." It is the "past of life, the dead and gone world" which the storyteller must die himself to enter (32). Just as the soul came down into the lower world to create forms yielding self-knowledge, so Mann the storyteller must go down into the well of the past (like Joseph) in search of "the nature of man. That it is which we shall seek out in the underworld and death, as Ishtar there sought Tammuz and Isis Osiris, to find it where it lies, and is, in the past" (33).

In this sense Mann, perhaps more explicitly than any of the Modernist

authors, identifies the myth he lives by as the descent into the underworld. The "feast of storytelling" is a "feast of death, [a] descent into hell" (33). This is only natural, for in addition to the ancestral crypt, and the inferno it will become for Mann when he writes *Doctor Faustus*, the underworld is also that granary where the seeds of all narratives are held in storage by the Ur-storyteller, God. Mann's descent, then, reflects fundamental tenets of an archetypal poetics: soul-making and poesis are one; the *nekylia* reveals the primacy of the imaginal rediscovered in the myth-making endeavors of Modernism. As we have seen, Yeats also argued that the writer had to die daily in order to be reborn in the incorruptible forms of poetry, and Conrad converted to a writing life after his hellish journey up the Congo. For these and other Modernists, the descent to the underworld was the Ur-myth initiating their vocation, the creative fall of Icarus into the sea of life.

Mann continues to make use of the descent to the underworld as one of the most central motifs in the Joseph novels, running through all four volumes. Jacob's flight into Mesopotamia from the wrath of Esau is the first fully developed allusion to the myth, which is then re-enacted by Joseph during his journey downwards into Egypt. This journey begins when Joseph is thrown into the pit by his brothers in the vale of Dothan, where he goes to meet them wearing the coat of many colors which Jacob has given him as a sign of his favor. In their envious rage, the brothers attack him like "a pack of hungry wolves" who chant "Down, down, down!" as they shred his coat and struggle to "tear him into fourteen pieces" (373). This is the most vividly realized and emotionally gripping scene in the entire work, and Mann's depiction of the brutal beating has something of the air of the Nazi muggings just beginning when Mann was working on this tetralogy. Joseph is left, with one eye beaten shut and badly bruised, to lie three days and nights "in dirt and earth mould, among crawling worms, without bite or sup, without consolation or any reasonable hope of ever reaching the light again" (386). When he is rescued by the Ishmaelites he is covered with his own excrement, and comes "naked and foul out of the depth as from the body of his mother" (397).

This description envisages the underworld as an inferno of human suffering and torment, yet alludes to the mythic precedent of Osiris dismembered by his brothers after being tricked into his coffin, and to the future rehearsal of the myth during Christ's three days and nights under the "stone before the grave." Hence there soon emerges the sense of the grave as a place where the ancient patterns that give meaning to life are revealed. As each brother binds Joseph "more firmly to the lower world," he begins to perceive with increasing clarity the "undertones and basses of his composition" and the nature of the role he is playing (388-389). The defamation of his ego opens his ears to the metaphorical nuances of the language, as he recognizes the "various interpretations" of the word *bor* which the brothers had used for the pit: "It meant not only well, but prison; not only prison, but the underworld, the kingdom of the dead; so that prison and the underworld were one and the same thought, one being only a word for the other" (390). In his present

extremity in the well Joseph identifies with "the dead moon" and "the gods of light who must for a time descend to the underworld," which he calls "the nether-earthly sheepfold, Etrura, the kingdom of the dead, where the son becomes the lord, the shepherd, the sacrifice, the mangled god" (390).

That is to say, as his ego is extinguished by the fires of the inferno, the ancestral soul begins to reveal the cryptic patterns stored in its granary. Beneath the complex "wealth of allusion" (390) evoked by his crisis (allusions to Osiris, to Tammuz, to Christ, to Jacob, and to the planetary deities periodically eclipsed during the descent into Sheol), Joseph begins to intuit the original fall of the spirit into matter as the stone at the bottom of the well of the past. As his upperworld eyes become dim in the darkness of the pit, he becomes "transparent" to the "characteristic recurrence of the prototype" (389), and he is "filled with the joy" of recognizing "a transparency of the ancient pattern" of his descent into the pit, which is a "repetition and realization" of the journeys of his ancestors (390). Hence, "the more lamentable his situation became ... the more clearly the undertones of his thoughts came out, the more deceptively his present mirrored itself in its heavenly prototype" (391).

It is therefore "another Joseph who cried out from beneath the stone" (383) and who emerges from the pit transformed by his awareness of the mysteries enacted in the temple of the soul: the underworld is a *temenos* as well as a prison. The Old Ishmaelite who delivers him from "the depth as from the body of his mother" becomes the midwife of the "twice born" son (397). A Hermes like stranger then appears to guide Joseph and the Ishmaelites through the "melancholy underworld" of desert between Gaza and Egypt (471), an inferno of "corpse colored sand" covering "bleached skeletons" (476). This stranger tells Joseph that the descent to the underworld is an event repeated many times during the course of a single life, "for the life of mankind cometh to an end several times, and each time cometh the grave and the rebirth, and many times must he be, until at length he is" (416).

And so indeed it proves to be, as Joseph recognizes that his journey into Egypt is a re-enactment of Jacob's descent into Mesopotamia, and hence an "uncanny" imitation of "the pattern" by which the life of the present pours "into the forms of myth" (551). Jacob makes the same connection, when hearing of Joseph's "death" he compares himself to Isis, Orpheus, and Inanna, and thinks of "descending into the pit--in other words to the kingdom of the dead--and fetching Joseph back" (435). In doing so, he would "conform to the mythical pattern," going down like Ishtar through the seven gates "to the lowest depth whence springeth the water of life" where he will steal Joseph from the "mistress below" as once he had stolen Rebecca from Laban (436). Meanwhile, in the "nether world" of Egypt, "to which the pit had been the entrance," Joseph takes the name "Usarsiph; lowest among those below" (545), and while there he must undergo a "second catastrophe, his second descent to the grave" (751) after being thrown into prison by Potiphar.

Joseph had achieved a sort of intimacy with his master Potiphar, who had heard of the Hebrew's descent to the "lower world" and rebirth as the "new born" Usarsiph (597), and who was fond of having Joseph read "of That which is in the Underworld" from one of his papyri (610). Potiphar accepts Joseph's identification with Osiris as "belonging to the kingdom of the dead" (642), and Potiphar's wife is compared to the vulture goddess Isis in her attempts to seduce Joseph into sexual reanimation (746). She tells Joseph her dream of having cut her hand with a pomegranate knife (679), and his reticent virtue forces her to "make magic spells for the binding of her lover and to sacrifice to a horrible nether-world deity" called the Bitch, during a Walpurgisnacht invocation of the "pus-eyed nightmare, rotten fungus, slaving slut of hell" (809f.). Finally, she tears his caftan off after a pomegranate feast at sunset with her maidens, and when Potiphar returns home accuses Joseph of having attempted to rape her (as Hades had Persephone).

Joseph is subsequently sentenced to prison on a island up the Nile, which he is taken to on a barge. While floating along his mind is again opened to the rich correspondences with previous mythical descents: like Inanna, he sees that "the hour of unveiling, of putting off of ornaments, was at hand, the hour of the descent into hell"; it is the sowing time "when Corn King is buried, when Usir is borne down to the dark"; he is punished like Gilgamesh was for having scorned Ishtar; and like Attar or Tammuz he descends to "Etrura, the sub-terrestrial sheepfold, Aralla, the kingdom of the dead" (854). This wealth of allusion enriches his reverie as he drifts along the waters on an "oxboat like Usir's when it moves down to light the great sheepfold below" (858). That is to say, once again, that the revelation of the mythic patterns of the underworld accompanies the "severe crisis of the climax and the utter downfall and transformation of his life" (854). When Joseph is "summoned from the grave" to interpret Pharoah's dreams, he explicitly links these mythic patterns with the underworld: "For the pattern and the traditional," he says to Pharoah, "come from the depths which lie beneath and are what binds us" (937).

It is relevant then that after Joseph interprets Pharoah's dreams, he presides over the storage and distribution of grain, since Hades has a close relationship to the seeds of Demeter and Persephone which he stored in underground silos. Mann's last extended allusion to the underworld occurs when "Joseph Takes a Bride", where the marriage ceremonies have a "strongly funereal flavor" (1004) and re-enact Persephone's abduction. Like Lawrence, Mann suggests here that the archetype of marriage is situated in the underworld. Asenath, Joseph's bride, "had led among flowers a life" with her playmates in "a rolling meadowy stretch carpeted with narcissus and anemones," until the time of her marriage (1002). Joseph is then seen as Hades, "a dark equivocal phenomenon ... an abductor" by whom Asenath fears she is "going to be raped" (1000). Furthermore, the marriage contract stipulates that like Persephone "the child should not live all the year round with the sinister

brigand, but should return and live as a maid with her parents for a certain by no means small part of each year" (1001). Even the ceremony itself reproduces Mann's version of the Eleusinian mysteries: Asenath is accompanied by 24 maidens who all carry torches and perform a "nine-fold spiral dance" (1004-1005), just as, in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Persephone danced with her 24 nymphs in the meadows before her abduction. And like the grieving Demeter, the mother of the bride receives consolation from Baubo, "a fat, half-naked old woman" riding a "pregnant sow" and rehearsing a "stream of bad jokes" (1007).

Mann's network of allusions in this final reference to the Classical mysteries of the underworld in *Joseph and His Brothers* includes Goethe, who in *Faust* has Baubo riding on a sow to the Walpurgisnacht. In *Doctor Faustus*, Mann reverts to Germanic legend, and continues to associate death, illness, and severe crisis (underworld as inferno) with the creative imagination (underworld as granary). Serenus Zeitblom, the novel's narrator, clarifies this association with reference to the "deities of the depths" venerated by the Grecian mysteries (9), noting that "culture is in very truth the pious and regulating, I might say the propitiatory entrance of the dark and uncanny into the service of the gods" (10). The novel then develops at length upon this "highly questionable" role of the daemonic in human creativity and German culture.

The conditions of its composition follow the pattern of personal and cultural collapse which is the peculiar precondition for the emergence of the underworld in the great Modernist works. Written during the years when Germany was being destroyed, and dealing with the years 1885-1930, the novel narrows its focus to the two periods of historical collapse I have associated with the collective descent to the underworld. Biographically, the period of the composition of *Doctor Faustus* was one of Mann's most difficult: Gunilla Bergsten writes that the unstable existence of exile in America "must have been almost shattering" to a man of Mann's regularity, and that he was "deeply depressed by the grim developments in Germany" (2-6).

In addition, while writing the novel Mann suffered an outbreak of erysipelas, which was intensely painful, and he was operated on for what was found to be cancer of the lung in 1946. He also received the painful news of Gerhard Hauptmann's death on his seventy first birthday (Hamilton 337-340). Henry Hatfield has suggested that Mann was "in hell while writing *Doctor Faustus*" which "is a twentieth century *Inferno*" (*Masterpieces* 126). Under this intense "physical and mental strain" (Bergsten 6), Mann wrote a novel which Hamilton calls his "greatest struggle with the impossible" (340), and which is another Modernist revisioning of the underworld theme. The whole situation recalls Yeats description of the daimon, which brings the soul of the man of genius to "the greatest obstacle he may confront without despair" ("Per Amica" qtd. in Langbaum: 190).

The impending sense of cultural crisis and personal collapse is linked, in *Doctor Faustus*, with illness and creative breakdown. The narrator Zeitblom speaks of the "paralyzing difficulties of the time" (243), and the of predominance of "false, worn out clichés" (239) stifling creative genius. The artist's duty, under these conditions, is to "breakthrough the time itself" (243) in order to achieve original creation. This kind of creativity is seen as true "devil's work" requiring a criminal pact with the underworld. Leverkühn sells his soul to the devil to catalyze this breakthrough, leading to the composition of *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, a choral work Zeitblom says produces the "general impression ... of a journey into hell, wherein are worked through the visional representations of the hereafter, in the earlier, shamanistic stages, as well as those developed from antiquity and Christianity, down to Dante" (358). The catastrophe at the end of WWII also leads Zeitblom to see the "'thousand-year' history" of the Reich as "a *descensus Averno* lighted by the dance of roaring flames" (452).

Mann's conflation of the aesthetic quest for new forms with the rise and fall of Nazi Germany, his multiple allusions to all aspects of German culture, and his inclusion of autobiographical material in this painful portrait of the artist's transformation, unites the four tenors of the metaphor of the underworld--infernno, crypt, granary, and temenos--in a single image.⁶ This complexity and breadth in Mann's use of the myth shows how the soul of the underworld permeates his life and work, revealing its faces in every impulse of his creative imagination. Serenus Zeitblom speaks for Mann, when, at the beginning of the novel, he asks "What sphere of human endeavor, even the most unalloyed, the most dignified and benevolent, would be entirely inaccessible to the influence of the powers of the underworld, yes, one must add, quite independent of the need of fruitful contact with them?" (9).

Notes

¹ See N.O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief*, and Jung's commentary in Paul Radin's *The Trickster*. In the Homeric Hymn, Hermes is called "the chief of robbers" (Athanasakis 39).

² For a discussion of the Heraclitean fragment which declares that Hades and Dionysos "are the same," see Veronique Foti, *Spring* 1983 125-130.

³ For a detailed discussion of the "*Hadesfahrt*" in *The Magic Mountain* see especially Lotti Sandt (15f.), and also Hans Wysling (317) and Manfred Diercks (219).

⁴ Mary Watkins provides a useful overview of the discovery of this mythogenetic region of the psyche from Pierre Janet to the present in her *Waking Dreams*.

⁵ For details regarding Mann's repeatedly declared affinity with C.G.

Jung, see my article "The Descent to the Underworld: Jung and His Brothers."

⁶ Among these personal details Hamilton notes references to Mann's sister's suicide and the house in Palestrina where *Buddenbrooks* was written, which in *Doctor Faustus* becomes the place where the pact with the devil occurs.

Chapter Five

The Persistence of the Hades Complex

5.1 Malcolm Lowry's Day of the Dead

Under the Volcano was composed during a period of personal crisis for its author that coincided with the universal catastrophe of the second World War, and it makes extensive use of the myth of the descent to Hades to give shape and significance to its material.¹ Just as earlier works of the Modern period, written around the time of the first World War, used the metaphor of the underworld to express the way personal and historical collapse lead to revelatory breakthroughs, so here the myth again emerges as the "gestalt" (as Day puts it) of Lowry's life and work.

The personal and historical conditions under which the novel was begun reflect the dynamic of the descent to the underworld discussed in the chapters above. Lowry traveled by boat from San Diego to Acapulco in 1936, landing on the first or second of November, Mexico's Day of the Dead. The first version of the novel was completed as a short story by July, 1937, during which time Lowry's life was a miserable affair of pathological drunkenness and continual skirmishes with his wife Jan, culminating in their divorce in 1940. In that year, Lowry married Margerie Bonner in Los Angeles and moved to Canada, where he completed another longer version of the novel which was rejected by twelve publishers in 1941 (the number 12, by the way, was of magical significance to Lowry). Then he sat down solidly to sober work, eight hours a day, for the next two years. Aided by Margerie's ministrations and the cabalistic library and companionship of Charles Stansfield-Jones, Lowry managed to take the "mescal-inspired phantasmagoria the *Volcano* by the throat and really do something about it" (Lowry, *Letters* 63). The novel was then completed and accepted for publication in 1946 (Kilgallin 127-129).

This pattern of composition is familiar by now: as with Eliot's completion of *The Waste Land*, the mythic structures which give shape and significance to *Under the Volcano* emerged after the fragments of the narration had been gathered together during a period of marital hell and martial law. Lawrence's great novels were also composed under the conditions of divorce and

remarriage, personal nightmare, political persecution, and national catastrophe. Similarly, Hermann Broch's *The Death of Virgil* was begun in a Nazi concentration camp and published in America in 1945, and Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* was completed during his 'exile' from Nazi Germany, a period of serious illness and depression in Los Angeles. The point here is that the governing principles of the archetypal imagination emerge during a period of personal and historical collapse, metaphorically akin to the descent to the underworld, and understood with reference to that myth by the writers themselves. Both Mann and Lowry, in fact, use the Faustus legend to express this complex of creativity and collapse, placing it against the backdrop of the underworld, where demon and daimon become indistinguishable.

Lowry's letters about this period establish the reciprocity of revelation and the descent to Hades. In his "S.O.S." letter to John Davenport in 1936 (Letters 11-13), Lowry says he is "sinking fast by both bow and stern" in Oaxaca. He is in "terrible condition ... the perfect Kafka situation" without the humor, only the perfect horror of being spied on perpetually (as Lawrence was in Cornwall) by the "polyagnous--is it polyagnous? Perhaps polygamous" eyes of the police. "An absolutely fantastic tragedy is involved," he writes, feeling himself caught in "a nightmare almost beyond belief" during which he gazes into "the black recesses of what used to be a mind" and sees "imminent insanity". His only hope is to pray to "the Virgin for those who have nobody with," and his only friend a tertiary syphilitic (shades of Adrian Leverkühn) who he describes in another letter to Conrad Aiken (15) pinning "a medal of the Virgin of Guadalupe" on his coat thinking he is Jesus.

Yet in spite of the horror, Lowry discovers "a beauty ... absolutely fantastic as the aforementioned tragedy" and he compares himself to Columbus, who tore "through one reality and discovered another." In these letters, then, the fascist spies of the political underworld coincide with the abysmal darkness of insanity and nightmare associated with a psychological descent to Hades. During this time the terrible beauty of *Under the Volcano*. It is interesting to note here that Yeats also wrote his hymn to the dead (*A Vision*) during a period of separation from Maud Gonne, marriage, and political revolution. Similarly, Jung recorded his *Seven Sermons to the Dead* in 1916, after his own traumatic breakdown on the eve of World War I, during which time he broke from Freud and began his affair with Tony Wolf. In each case, the destructive rape lead to the revelation of the mythic patterns of another reality (the *eidola* of Hades), which give shape to those lives capable of enduring the descent, and significance to those works recording it.

In another letter written to Juan Marquez in 1937 (13-14), Lowry speaks of Oaxaca as a town "consisting entirely of spics and dogs" and ruled over by "the legislator ... who seeks, for his own profit, to exploit the weaknesses of those unable to help themselves", a kind of bureaucratic Hades. He writes that "If I do not drink now a certain amount there seems no possible doubt

that I shall have a nervous breakdown," and that nevertheless he has "a kind of fixation on the place" and "practically a pathological sympathy for those who do wrong (what others are there?) and get into the shit." Here the associations of breakdown, pathology, and paranoia are linked with the animal (dog) and matter (shit) of the underworld in a phenomenological complex similar to that discussed by Hillman (*Dream* 142-202). This suggests that Lowry's experience and perception of the world around him during this period when *Under the Volcano* was germinated was very much conditioned by the basic structures of the imaginal associated with the descent to Hades.

A final letter to Conrad Aiken written in 1937 (15) makes this connection painfully explicit. Lowry recounts having been "imprisoned as a spy in a dungeon compared with which the Chateau d'If--in the film--is a little cottage in the country overlooking the sea," and he describes himself as being in a "condition of amnesia, breakdown, heartbreak, consumption, cholera, alcoholic poisoning, and God will not like to know what else." He is, in mythological terms, imprisoned in the palace of Hades: "Where I am," Lowry writes, "it is dark. Lost."

To this state of creative damnation Lowry commits himself. Like Thomas Mann's Adrian Leverkühn, Lowry has his Consul identify with Faustus flying headlong into hell for magical and aesthetic powers gained by a pact with the devil. Both men, it seems, were as aware of the daemonic aspects of creativity, symbolized by the soul's attraction to the underworld as, say, Yeats and Conrad, and both novels unite magic, music, politics, and creativity by use of the myth of Hades.² Independently of Mann, Lowry even includes the motif of syphilitic infection in his version of the Faust complex, as we see both in the poem who pins medals on Lowry while drunk in Oaxaca, and in the Consul himself, who, like Leverkühn, visits a brothel where he fears contracting the disease. Also like Mann (and like Hermann Broch, who has his Virgil bound by creative necessity to the contagion of evil represented by Caesar, just as, one suspects, Broch saw himself paradoxically bound to the daemonic world of Hitler's concentration camps) Lowry has the Consul relate his personal condition to the universal fate of mankind during the period of the second World War. The novel, he writes in his letter to Jonathan Cape in 1946, is "a prophecy, a political warning" (66) and its final apocalypse foreshadows the ultimate decline of the west. The Indian dying by the roadside with whom the Consul identifies is "mankind dying--then, in the Battle of the Ebro, or now, in Europe" (79).

Hence the broad range of reference implied by the descent to the underworld encompasses all the levels upon which the novel's symbolism functions: personal, historical, aesthetic, and religious.³ The "gestalt", therefore, structuring the various imaginal elements of the novel, can be named the Hades complex.⁴ Lowry has the Consul say "I love hell," as he angrily leaves Hugh and Yvonne to enter the dark wood hiding the Farolito where he will be murdered; "I can't wait to get back there. In fact I'm running, I'm almost

back there already" (345). In his long letter to Jonathan Cape, Lowry declares that *Under the Volcano* "can widen ... one's knowledge of hell" and that it "tells us something new about hellfire" (84, 80). Kilgallin compares this letter to Thomas Mann's "Descent into Hell", the Prelude which sounds the various leitmotifs developed in *Joseph and His Brothers*. It is this letter which identifies the novel as an Inferno, calling the la Selva at the book's opening, Hugh's recollection of the opening lines of the *Divine Comedy* in the middle of the book, the gloomy cantina El Bosque, and the dark wood in which Yvonne dies "chords in a progression of musical motifs alluding to Dante" (67). "All these chords," he says, "struck and resolved, vastly contribute" to the reader's unconscious understanding of the book. It is as if we can hear the plucking of the Orphean lute just beneath the surface of the narrative, drawing us into the depths the Consul is eventually thrown into, but from which we, as readers, are able to return.

In addition to these and other motifs produced by the Hades complex we can add the various elements of the dream which Hillman relates to the descent to the underworld (*Dream* Chapter 6). Most of those he discusses (sickness, animals, bodies of water, remembering and forgetting, circles and mandalas, psychopathology, ice and coldness, revelry and music, carnival, and upside-down) occur in *Under the Volcano*: the Consul is sick throughout the novel, has a dog thrown into the barranca with his dead body, is continually remembering a crisis at sea during which some German prisoners were killed, finds letters and sonnets he has written long forgotten in some saw dust cantina, repeatedly imagines the world spinning around like the ferris wheel which turns him upside down at the carnival, and imagines a shaft of sunlight piercing a block of ice as symbolic of his relationship with Yvonne. In addition, the entire book is set on the Day of the Dead, a festival of revelry and music during which the dead are welcomed among the living, and the distinction between the two is blurred.

All of these aspects of the Hades complex show that the underworld can be seen as inferno, granary, crypt, and temenos. In addition to the most obvious references to Dante's inferno, the novel as a whole shows that the *nekylia* leads to a revelation of those elemental ideas which govern both art and life. *Under the Volcano* is a vast repository (a granary) of all those myths and occult systems which pattern life, uniting every element of world and novel in that holonomic web of symbolic correspondences which Lowry found in the Cabbala. His Consul lives, and is indeed trapped in "a world of occult and total correspondence, one in which there is a vital connection not only between things material and things spiritual, but also in a very mysterious way between all things that have concrete existence" (Day 320). Cross compares the Consul to Ahab, whose estrangement also leads him to "perform cabalistic exercises, efforts to dominate the phenomenal world by arranging it into arcane patterns of correspondence" (37). The novel's "fusion of mythologies," Epstein writes, is "common to theosophical writers" (182) whose elaborate systems were based

on communications with the dead.

These formulations suggest that the underworld can also be seen as that web of interrelations connecting all aspects of the phenomenal world that Katherine Hayles sees in the field theories of the new physics. Since it is the mythic mode of thinking that best expresses this inherent unity of psyche and world, the descent necessarily activates archetypes of the imaginal which symbolically express a holonomic world view (Grof, "Ancient Wisdom" 75-92). To recite the litany of the mythic allusions upon which the "arcane correspondences" are based would be to name the trees in the "forest of symbols" that Lowry tends in *Under the Volcano*: the Qlipoth of the Cabbala, Faust's flight into hell, the Eleusinian mysteries, the Aeneid, Quetzalcoatl and Christ, Buddhist and Hindu myths, and Dante (all of which David Markson discusses in his chapter by chapter analysis). All of these myths function as those seed forms or elementary ideas which give shape and significance to the narrative.

In addition, the novel is a crypt, an ancestral vault resonant with the whispering voices of the illustrious dead. Like *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*, *The Cantos* or *The Waste Land*, the motif of the descent to the underworld spontaneously activates a complex allusive technique. "He drew on the writers of the past," M.C. Bradbrook writes, "for the community of the dead gave him an alternative world" (4). Richard Cross notes that, in the novel, "the presence of the dead is felt more keenly than that of the living" (28). In this sense then the novel is literally that pan-daemonium throughout with which it ends: it is an underworld inhabited by Marlowe, Melville, Virgil, Dante, Gogol, Blake, Calderon, Dostoevsky, Bunyan, Baudelaire, Cocteau, Rimbaud, Shelley, Yeats, London, Masfield, Conrad, Boehme, Kafka, Wagner, Mozart, Bach ... to name a few of the shades critics have discerned thronging in the fumes of Lowry's brain, thirsty for blood (or mescal).

As, with Eliot, Joyce, Mann, Pound, or Lawrence, Lowry's underworld quickly modulates from inferno to granary to crypt, where the dead reveal the archetypal designs of necessity and fate informing the aesthetic venture. Perhaps most importantly, however, Lowry's Hades is also a *temenos*, a place where soul is made, where all is utterly changed so that a terrible beauty may be born. "It is the thing that 'used to be called: soul' that interests Lowry," Douglas Day writes, "and one of the most important lessons to learn about *Under the Volcano* is that for its author the concept of the soul still meant something" (303). Tony Kilgallin agrees that "As a God seeker, Geoffrey typifies Jung's modern man in search of his soul" (186), a reference to a book by Jung which Lowry found "soundly full of the wisest kind of speculation" (*Letters* 250). All the heartbreak, drunkenness, breakdown, and torment (leading to Lowry's attempted suicide in 1946, when after completing the novel he returned with Marjorie to Mexico) revolve around the soul-making journey to Hades.

It is precisely this disintegration that "enables a thematic unity to evolve" in the novel (Bradbrook 56): as with Yeats' Byzantium poems, it is exactly the breakdown of order that leads to the revelation of those "vast images out of Spiritus Mundi" that give shape and significance to potential anarchy and futility. And this breakthrough is accompanied, in Lowry and in all the writers discussed above, with a renewed sense of the meaning of that little word which occurs so surprisingly often in works called Modern: soul. This transition via Charon's ferry from ego to soul is put most eloquently by Lowry himself, who in *La Mordida* (an unfinished sequel to *Under the Volcano*) wrote:

What had died was himself, and what came about through these confusions, these oscillations, these misunderstandings and lies and disasters, these weavings to and fro, these treacheries, these projections of the past upon the present, of the imagination upon reality, that out of these dislocations of time, these configurations of unreality, and the collapse of will, out of these all but incommunicable agonies, as of the mind and heart stretched and attenuated beyond endurance on an eternal rack, out of arrant cowardice before little danger, and bravery in the face of what seemed slight to overcome, and heartbreak, and longing had been born, darkly and tremulously, a soul.

Out of the death of the ego, via the humiliations and torments of an alchemical reduction to elementals, soul is born in the underworld. As that "imagining substrate" spontaneously producing the mythic images giving shape and significance to art and life, the soul manifests its psychic reality in the poetic visions of metaphor and music. Reflecting Hillman's sense of soul as expressing the "poetic basis of the mind", Lowry records his personal *nekyia* in the "passionate poetic writing about things that will always mean something" (*Letters* 80). He writes that the "conception of the whole thing was essentially poetical" and compares the novel to "a kind of symphony" (*Letters* 65-66) in which all the mythical and magical elements are like "chords, struck and resolved" which then "vastly contribute unconsciously to the final weight of the book" (84).

Poetry and music, then are as native to the soul as those governing archetypal images to which it gives birth. And, as Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, and Lowry's *Under the Volcano* all attest, the revelation of these interrelations of soul, myth, poetry, and music emerge during the rape and descent into Hades. By this process, soul is returned to the world: all of nature then seems alive in the novel, and, as William Gass points out in his essay on Lowry, all nature is simultaneously metaphor (55-76). When Persephone or Orpheus return from Hades, they bring that informing awareness of the *eidola* of the depths that shadows all living things with the promise--and the threat--of meaning.

5.2 Hermann Broch's "Realm of Shadows"

Hermann Broch's *The Death of Virgil* (1945) is perhaps the greatest, and surely the most sustained hymn to the underworld sung by any of the Modernist writers discussed in these pages. It illustrates the idea that the descent to the underworld reveals the archetypal patterns governing life and art, and very explicitly links the idea of soul-making with poesis. Furthermore, the dates and conditions of its composition coincide almost exactly with Lowry's work on *Under the Volcano*, T.S. Eliot's on *Four Quartets*, and Thomas Mann's on *Doctor Faustus*. All four masterworks of late Modernism were created under the spectre of personal crisis, exile, political catastrophe, and (in the case of Lowry and Broch) persecution and incarceration; and all three works use the descent to the underworld to express the creative breakthroughs catalyzed by these conditions.

Broch had used the myth in his first novel *The Sleepwalkers* (1932), in which Mutter Hentjen "is Persephone, queen of the dead, raped and brought to the netherworld by her husband (Hades)" (Schlant 47). Sleepwalking in the novel becomes a metaphor for leaving established patterns of thought and behaviour during disintegrative times, with the goal of achieving "totality through confrontation with the irrational-metaphysical realm symbolized in the Orphic descent" (Schlant 59). This theme continues to be the major burden of Broch's essays from 1933-1934, and of the short novella *The Unknown Quality*, in which, as Broch writes, "a breakthrough from the irrational ... reconnects the consciousness ... with its origins in the soul" (qtd. in Schlant: 73).

The infernal aspects of the *nekyia* are stressed in Broch's later novel *The Guiltless*, which is a reworking of the "Zodiac Stories" composed in 1932 after Broch had met C.G. Jung (Schlant 73). Revised in 1949, during a summer at Yale University, *The Guiltless* recounts the transformation of Vienna, a gay "apocalypse-turned-hell" during the Nazi period (Schlant 133). It incorporates "mock descents into various hells" to express the "virulent negativity" of "Germany as a country gone to hell" (Schlant 136, 141). Schlant cites particular allusions to Hades in the *liebestod* of Zacharias and A., which reinvestigates the "Vulcanic netherworld" (132) explored in Book II of *The Death of Virgil*, and later in the novel, where "several layers of hell--and netherworld images--converge in the figure of Hildegard" (133), who is seen as a vampire and as Persephone inviting the rape by Hades (134).

Broch's most extensive use of the descent to the underworld, however, occurs in *The Death of Virgil*, a long prose-poem novel recounting the last hours of Virgil's life, during which he decides to burn the Aeneid. Broch's decision to rework this theme came as a result of the parallel he saw between Virgil's time and his own: both were afflicted by "civil wars, dictatorship, a dying off of old religious forms" and extensive emigrations; Virgil's desire to

burn his masterpiece could not, Broch reasons, have been an "act of despair by petty reasons but rather the entire historical and metaphysical content of the epoch had its share in the decision" (qtd. in Schlant: 97).

It is this same sense of political catastrophe and personal crisis that impels Broch's own descent into the underworld, and informs his use of the myth in *The Death of Virgil*. 1934 was a year of civil war and the Nazi-Putsch in Austria, and Broch's constant financial worries, extremely complicated personal situation, and political fears initiated a period of sterility and wandering in his life (Schlant 75). In 1936, his 50th birthday found him depressed about the political situation, harassed by family obligations, torn over a decision between science and literature, and worried about running out of time (Schlant 87). This period of crisis came to a dramatic climax on March 13, 1938, when Broch was arrested and imprisoned by the Nazis, an experience which "forced him to confront the possibility of his own death and provided the visionary and mystic impetus for the cognitive quest of death soon to be embodied in *The Death of Virgil*" (Schlant 92).⁵

Broch had apparently begun the novel in 1937 and taken it to prison with him, where new sections were composed. But according to Jean Starr Untermeyer, his translator, Broch wrote Aldous Huxley that it was when he was in the prison "with the possibility of his own death not far off, that the germinal ideas of the work first came to him" (qtd. in Schlant: 175). Broch was then released on March 31, 1938, and with the help of various friends and people familiar with his work (including James Joyce) he obtained a visa enabling him to leave for London on July 29. After a few months in Scotland working on the novel, he left for the United States in the fall. There, in spite of frequent interruptions to participate in relief and rescue efforts for those left in Europe, the help of grant money and friends like Einstein and Erich Kahler enabled Broch to complete *The Death of Virgil* in 1945, as the war gradually ended (Schlant 92-95).

Hence, the composition of this magnificently poetic hymn to the underworld occurred in conditions very similar to those discussed in the previous chapters: Broch shares pressing financial concerns, familial crisis, and exile with Joseph Conrad, Thomas Mann, and T.S. Eliot, and political persecution (including spying and apprehension) with Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence, and Malcolm Lowry. These were the conditions which in each case coincided with the creation of works in which the descent to the underworld becomes the central metaphor, and *The Death of Virgil* is no exception. Each of the four sections of the novel combines implied and explicit allusions to the myth, moving from a vision of the underworld as an inferno in Chapter 1 ("Water-The Arrival"), as a granary in which the seed forms of life and art are hidden in Chapter 2 ("Fire-The Descent"), as an ancestral vault housing the illustrious dead who serve as role models for future generations in Chapter 3 ("Earth-The Expectation"), and as a *temenos* of sacred transformation and recreation in Chapter 4 ("Air-The

Homecoming").

In Chapter 1, an imperial barge carrying the dying Virgil symbolizes the ship of death and the journey into the netherworld. The ship enters the harbor of Brundisium at sunset, and Virgil disembarks on a litter to be carried through the city to Caesar's palace. Virgil's journey through the city to the palace is seen largely as the entrance to hell: "everywhere smouldered avarice and lust ... all devouring" (15) as Virgil is overcome by an "awareness of the people's profound capacity for evil in all its ramifications" (24). When he wants to escape "the volcanic infernal yelling which flowed incessantly and heavily over the plaza" through which he is carried (24), a boy appears with a torch (like a ministrant in the Eleusinian mysteries, this same boy will appear as a *psychopompos* in Chapter 4) to guide the litter through the labyrinthine alleys of a ghetto called Misery Street (33). Like Gustav Aschenbach blindly pursuing Tadzio through the twisting streets of disease-ridden Venice, Virgil is led past dark stairways "peopled by sundry shades" (40) who sit in front of houses which "discharged a beastly excremental stench ... amid utmost depravity and most wretched decay" (41).

During this passage he shamefully endures the "senseless maledictions" (44) of the mothers of Misery Street, who are like "Erinys intent on harassing and torturing him" with "savage derision" until he is "finally discharged from the hellish alley gorge" (47). Schlant calls these mothers the "cognitively unredeemed" (99), yet as Erinys they have the mysterious knowledge of Virgil's fate which is a central concern of this first chapter: they are described as "imbued with the darkness of time, knowing that the cycle of fate encircled the abyss of nothingness, knowing of all the despairing, all the misled, all the exhausted ones who stumble unresistingly into the abyss of the middle as soon as they are prematurely forced to interrupt the journey" (44). These mothers stand at the gateway to the inferno, where all hope is abandoned in the middle of life's way.

Then Virgil comes suddenly in view of the Imperial Palace, which gives off an "infernal blaze ... irresistible and seductive" in an atmosphere of "infernal fog" (49). The litter penetrates through mobbed outer circles of hell to a gateway which is described (in the Medieval tradition of the illuminated manuscript) as the palace of Hades: it is a "fiery gullet" passing into which Virgil feels relief at "having escaped the infernal raw glare of the lights" (52). He is then taken to his room in a tower. Schlant points out that the "southwest exposure of his room has mythological significance as the direction which the dead must face" (98) and that the foetal position he assumes on the bed is the posture of burial (99). Then Virgil is described sinking down into the dream-delirium of the maternal underworld, "sinking under the surface of night, sinking down to the nocturnal ground soil on which the dream grows to timelessness, sinking under its own threshold to the primal source of the unformed and invisible, which always lay in wait to break out in storm and

destruction" (66).

Although this first chapter emphasizes the political and personal themes of the descent as infernal, it nevertheless strikes notes signalling the motifs to be developed in the second movement of this elaborately composed symphonic prose poem. Primary among these is the theme of fate, repeatedly sounded in the first chapter, and the revelation of the ultimate meaning of Virgil's life (the entelechy which constitutes his fate) which occurs as he lies dying. "Only the dying," he muses, "understand communion, understand love" (69), and only in death, it seems, is the entelechy (the pattern which has governed life and art) revealed. Virgil calls this his "innate self", which he sees revealed in the "multiplicity" of evil he finds everywhere around him, "because the multiplicity had been there from the very beginning; indeed before all espial, before all hearkening, before all sensibility, it had been his own because recollection and retention are never other than the innate self, self-remembered" (36-37).

It is the end in his beginning, the entelechy governing his development, which stands fatefully revealed to Virgil during this journey into the underworld. As he passes ever more deeply into the "dream caverns" (70) of the night, carried by the flood that washes away all life (71), these archetypal patterns are glimpsed with increasing clarity, so that the "strangling convulsion on the edge of the abyss" (72) which drives Virgil to his bed at the end of Chapter 1 functions as the "breakthrough from the irrational which reconnects consciousness with its origins in the soul" (Broch, qtd. in Schlant: 73). In Chapter 2 ("Fire-The Descent"), the gates of the dream open wide, allowing the soul, which stands forever at her source" (38), to speak, and the metaphor of the inferno modulates to the metaphor of the granary as the tenor of the myth of Hades.

Allusions to the underworld are abundantly and complexly interwoven into Virgil's dream monologue throughout "The Descent". The night is still "infernal" (77), but the soul is seen Janus-like as belonging "to the ethereal regions as well as to the fires of the underworld" (80), performing what Thomas Mann calls its hermetic function of "mediating between the above and below" (*Essays* 81). Looking out his window, Virgil sees three drunks "sent out from Hades" by fate (115), among whom Schlant reckons Vulcan, the limping artist husband of Venus (99) who is the god presiding over the volcanic depths of this chapter. Like Lowry, Broch associates the underworld with volcanic fury (the imagery of its fires permeate "The Descent") and creative power (Vulcan is the Greek Hephaistos, divine artisan).

After these infernal broodings, Broch turns to an extended meditation on the Orphic descent as a duty paradoxically denied to yet fulfilled by the artist, who is seen as "the enchanter, but not the saviour of man" (136). It is "the simple language of spontaneous kindness, the language of spontaneous human virtue, the language of awakening for which Orpheus had striven when, in

scare of Eurydice, he made ready for the descent into the realm of the shades" (137). Yet he fails to achieve this, for Orpheus symbolizes the damnation of the poet, trapped "in the prison of art" and unable to fulfil his human duty (137): "his glance had not been permitted to pierce deeper, not beneath the surface of the stones, not beneath the surface of the world, neither beneath that of language nor of art; the descent was forbidden him, most forbidden the titanic return from the depths, the return by which his humanity is proven" (138). In this respect, Broch's Virgil is very similar to Mann's Adrian Leverkühn, cut off from simple human kindness and love by his creative pact with the underworld. Broch then translates the famous passage from Book VI of the *Aeneid* ("easy the pathway that leads down to Hades") to emphasize the human duty which Aeneas performs (and Orpheus neglects) in the burial of "the friend whose soul has flown" (137-138).

Yet he goes on with a paraphrase which suggests that the "task of art, its human duty" to disclose "the divine through the self-perceptive knowledge of the individual soul" depends precisely upon the descent to the underworld (140): for art compels the soul, guided by the "goldly gleaming bough of truth", to descend "step by step, penetrating deeper and deeper through the inner thickets of her being until she gradually approached the unattainable darkness ... from which the ego emerged and to which it returned, the dark regions where the ego developed and became extinguished, the entrance and exit of the soul" (139). In this descent "the deepest secret of reality, the secret of correlation was revealed, the mutual relation existing between the realities of the self and the world, which lent the symbol the precision of rightness and exalted it to be the symbol of the truth, the truth-bearing correlation from which arose every creation of reality" (140).

Virgil, however, feels that he cannot find "the golden, shimmering bough" amidst the wilderness of palatial prison walls where he lies dreaming, because as a poet he is "lost in the thicket of images, of language, of words, of sounds" (143). Yet as a man he is able to go beyond the region of fear in his descent, "from surface to surface; down to the final one, the surface of sheer nothingness ... the surface of final oblivion" (145). Passing through the "Plutonian doors" to the "boundary of time" where he meets "the undecified god" (Hades), he is "hurtled downward" through horror, shame, denudation, and self-destruction on a "fate-driven journey" that ends amidst the "cold flames" of the "unremembered abandonment of the precreation" (145-146). The night dissolves into a nothingness in which "all perception and knowledge had become superfluous" and "memory like hope had vanished" (145).

Then Virgil remembers his lost love Plotia, who in the last chapter reappears as a kind of Beatrice in the earthly paradise. At this point though she "remained undiscoverable in the underbrush of death ... sunk away from him into the reabandonment of the underworld" (150). She is his Eurydice, with whom he wishes to descend into the "obliterating fountain of nothingness,

to the sobering depths of the underworld ... going down to the primal base through the gates of horn, which would permit them to retrieve "a new fate from the last fate's embers" (151). Although Virgil again fears he cannot find "the gleaming shadow of love's golden bough, the undiscoverable", he recognizes that love, like art, depends on the "descent into the depths of unremembrance and the ascent once more in complete recollection" (151). As with Lawrence, eros and thanatos are here inextricably united in an Orphic vision of the artist, who is compelled to make the descent. But Plotia, like Eurydice (and like, one suspects, those Broch was forced to leave behind in his flight from the Nazis--his mother died in Theresienstadt), is left lost "in the shades ... indistinguishable in the shadowy realm, sunken into the hordes of the dead" (152).

The dying Virgil then identifies with the dismembered Orpheus, and sees himself as "a mute echo" reverberating in the desert mountains of Tartarus, as "a sightless skull, rolled out into the stone rubble on the shadowy shores of oblivion", and as "a blind eye without trunk, without voice, without breath ... thrown out to the vacuous blindness of the underworld" (156). Virgil then condemns himself for failing in his task of "casting off shadows ... of moving the stones from the sepulchre once again, so that humanity might rise to rebirth" (157). Like Orpheus, he has been forced to enter the depths of Hades, where he is lost in the underworld of memory, and he laments that "HE HAD NOT EVEN REACHED THE FIRST LEVEL UNDER THE IRON RULE OF VULCAN, EVEN LESS THE DEEPER REALM OF THE LAW-FOUNDING FATHERS, AND STILL LESS THE MUCH DEEPER ONE OF THE NOTHING, WHICH GIVES BIRTH TO THE WORLD, TO MEMORY, TO SALVATION" (157-158, caps in text).

This descent to the deeper levels of the underworld now overtakes Virgil as his ego is "annihilated ... unresistingly delivered to the clasp of emptiness" (160). He then lies listening "into the chaos" which "was dead, dead without an echo to the unasked question, dead the stony labyrinth of the universe, dead the shaft on the very bottom of which the naked ego, abased to extinction, divested both of question and answer, barely existed. Oh, back! back into darkness, into dream, into sleep, into death!" (161). And in this dream descent into the "black-invisible omnipotence" of Night (163), the archetypal forms of Hades are evoked: the "amorini" on the walls become a horde of demons "vomited forth from the bubbling cold volcanos of nothingness, which were erupting everywhere in the visible and invisible" (164); Scyllas, Centaurs, and Hydras emerge next to "bloodily-hissing, bloodily-bound heads of tousled, snake-like hair" (165); the room becomes "a chamber of furies" (166), the "gruesome and three-bodied" Moira appears (169), and a flock of half-birds perch "on the roof-top, terrible grave-birds with fishy eyes in a crowded row, owl-headed, goose-beaked, pig-bellied, gray-feathered with feet that were merely human hands webbed for swimming" (170). It is a "murderous, merry making pandemonium of the gods ... a volcano of nothingness in the

soul" (172), and of a rampant destruction on earth reflecting the fury of the Nazi period: "On every side the tomb-streets and tomb-cities of the death-inhabited world were ablaze, on every side the stony aimlessness of human fury glared forth" (173). Then all the dream forms of the underworld--its weird animals, half-birds, Moira, and furies--coalesce into a "single flaming haired fury with pale transparent body and streaming locks" which then sinks into "the empty ... shadowy crater" of the volcano (175).

Although these descriptions emphasize the infernal aspects of the *nekyia*, during which a host of wrathful deities (as in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*) devour the ego of the dying Virgil, references to more benign deities of the underworld are sprinkled throughout the chapter. Inferno gradually modulates to granary, as the underworld reveals itself as the storehouse of the seed forms of those symbolic images (the *eidola* of Hades) which have shaped Virgil's fate. As he lies "listening to dying", the "seed of death which was implanted in every life from the beginning and determined it, giving it a twofold, threefold significance" is revealed (80). This seed is the "dream-force of all images, particularly of those which gave direction to every life" (81); that is to say, the dream descent into the underworld reveals the archetypal patterns of the imaginal life, its *eidola*.

The text repeatedly emphasizes this apocalyptic linkage of doom and revelation. Virgil reflects that "he who succeeded in giving shape to death ... would find his own real shape as well" (85), and that fate had compelled him to "search for his own shape in that of death" (86). Hence the bottom of Hades is a void which is "divested of all symbols and yet containing the seed of every symbol" (159) and which is suffused by the power of the "twofold, runic first cause" (177). The hymn to the night that Virgil's dream sings, using his consciousness, expresses this revelation of "the archetype of being, the archetype of truth" (201) very clearly:

Dream-form emerges from dream-form, overlaid and unfolded,
In dream thou art I, thou art my perception,
Born with me as an unborn angel,
Beyond mischance, the shining omni-form
Of essence and order in which knowledge itself is born,
Shape of myself, my knowledge.

It is precisely in the dream descent to the underworld that these ultimate patterns of life and art are revealed, for "in dreams fate, our fate, becomes dreamily comprehensible for us" (209). This manifestation is an autonomous function of the lower levels of the unconscious, occurring independently of the ego: "the perception was not himself, it came out clearly from the invisible crystal of the structure, it was the crystal of dreams" (211). This "realm of shadows ... included the forms of every essence ... giving meaning, content and name" (220); it is the "last abyss of roots, the new reconciliation of form

to its eternal content" (212), a "singing ... darkly radiating root abyss" (215). These metaphors (crystal, root system, seed) reveal the underworld as the mythogenetic substratum of consciousness discussed in the introduction. It contains "the arch-image of all voices and all symbols" (214), and as Virgil descends ever more deeply, these elemental forms are delineated with increasing clarity: in "this last abyss of roots ... all speech was annulled, all poetry was annulled, so that only the deepest recesses of the dream-abyss might shine through, as if it were the final form of fate within the unavoidable multiplicity, the form which is the pattern of all forms" (212).

This revelation of the entelechy of fate and of the archetypal forms of the imaginal makes poetry, as the language of the soul, possible: soul-making, *nekyia*, and poesis here become one. Virgil reflects that poetry is "the strangest of all human occupations, the only one dedicated to a knowledge of death" (81), and that the task of the singer is "priestly, perhaps because of the strange consecration to death inherent in the enraptured fervor of every work of art" (82). Hence, the poet's descent to the underworld is a search for "a language ... outside the maze of voices, beyond all earthly linguistics" (90), for "a new speech ... of the most benumbed distance and desolation, unspeakably removed from humankind ... the tongue beyond any mother tongue" (116). This is "the voice of death" (196), and the *nekyia* reveals the soul as the source of the poem: as Virgil is dying, he feels his Aeneid "returning back into the unveiled nakedness of its hidden being, into the vibrating invisible from which poetry stems, subsumed again by the pure form, finding itself there like its own echo, like the soul housed in its crystal shell, singing of itself" (197). Here, the pure forms of the soul are identified as the hidden being of the poem. As poet and poem dissolve into the etheric abyss of the underworld, the "crystal and flute like" voice of the soul discloses itself as "the symbol of a work, as the symbol of all speech, as the symbol of every voice, as the arch-image of them all" (221).

At the nadir of his *nekyia* Virgil had heard a "universal chorus" in the inferno uttering a command to "Burn the Aeneid!" (178). Yet as he begins the ascent back to the upperworld of "waving fields" of grain, "spread out from shore to shore" (like Persephone returning to Demeter), an angel "like a boy" speaks the command to love (221) with a voice like "the quite distant echo of the symbolic arch-image hovering in the empyrean" (229). But the angel's voice is not his own, and Virgil's recognition of this fact compels him to remember the command to destroy the Aeneid.

Chapter 3 ("Earth-The Expectation") is largely concerned with the attempts of Caesar Augustus and Virgil's friends Plotius and Lucius to dissuade him of this resolve. They ultimately succeed through appeals to friendship rather than duty, and Octavian bestows upon "the dying Virgil the most appropriate gift: Apollo's laurel, the golden bough, needed to gain access to the netherworld" (Schlant 116). Schlant notes that the "influence of the netherworld

continues through Virgil's feverish hallucinations" in this chapter, and points out that the name of his physician (Charondas) "is the name of the old man who ferries the souls of the dead across the river Styx to the lower world" (111).

In addition to these allusions to the myth, the boy Lysanius reads the passage from the Aeneid recounting the return from the underworld through the gates of ivory (112), indicating the false nature of the consecration of the poem to the Empire. For Virgil emphasizes, in his conversations with Caesar and his friends, that the goal of poetry is not empire building, but to achieve an understanding of death (321), and that his great poem has failed in this respect. When Augustus counters that the Aeneid "contains every metamorphosis of death" and that Virgil has "pursued death into the shadows of the underworld" (326), the poet remains self disparaging: like Aeneas, he has "pursued death to the shadows of the underworld and returned thence with empty hands, himself an empty symbol, without salvation, without truth, without the truth of reality" (327). As a result, Virgil has not achieved the simple speech of humanity, which emerges from "the cavern of nothingness ... behind the twofold portal of death" (358); nor has he attained the "golden bough of redemption" (382) necessary to guide him more deeply into the underworld. Only when Octavian bestows this upon him at the end of the chapter is he prepared to "reach the nothingness along with his poem, in order that death appear and shatter the empty metaphor" (327). This final journey into the nothingness of the underworld is the burden of the last chapter of the novel, "Air-The Homecoming".

Having progressed from the inferno to the granary, this final chapter focuses on the underworld as *temenos*, a place of initiatory transformation. The primary transformation involved (in a chapter replete with innumerable transformations) is one from ego to soul. As Schlant points out, "the German original for 'air' is *aether* and points to the Greek conception of aether as a place of souls" (116). Here all that is mortal suffers a sea-change into immortal essence. An imagined imperial fleet leaves Brundisium (sailing for Byzantium, as it were, on innumerable ships of death) and eventually dissolves into the ether, as do all of Virgil's friends on board them. Death then reveals their entelechy: as they fall "into oblivion, their faces had become an unspeakable and unspeakably clear expression of their essential qualities." They are

absorbed into the glance of friendship ... which arose from the deepest recesses of the self, from the depths of a self that stemmed from a sphere beyond the senses, which no longer saw the material person and the material metaphor, but only the crystalline archetype, the crystalline entity formed by the essential qualities, resting so purely in the core of their essence, so free of memory and therefore so completely remembered, that all these friendly forms passed into a new interstate of memory, into a new interstate of

comprehensibility, full of light-casting shadows within muted sounds (444).

Virgil's own ship of death then elongates weirdly as the sun sets into the waters, and the boy riding on the bow (who is Lysanius, the same boy who appeared in the first chapter to guide Virgil through the hellish alleys of Misery Street to the Imperial Palace) becomes a "way showing" Hermes "stripped to complete transparency" and melting into the night (452). In imagery which parallels Lawrence's *nekyia* (in the *The Rainbow* and "The Ship of Death") Broch describes Virgil's boat dissolving too:

it was an endlessly floating phantom of night on the point of dissolving into immensity, immense in itself and prepared for rest in the unimaginable uncertainty of increasing infinity, floating toward the rainbow of night, which afloat itself, the floating portal of time at rest, was spanned in seven colors from east to west, reflected in the liquid element without touching it. (453)

Lysanius is then "wondrously changed" into a "seraphic apparition, the image of a star, a symbol" which is then "transmuted into the intrinsic substance of the spark-showering universe" before it enters "the seven-colored portal of the rainbow" (454).

Eventually Lysanius also merges with Virgil's lost Eurydice, Plotia (455), forming an hermaphroditic Beatrice who guides him to "the veritable journey's end" on the other shore (457). Here the lost Eden of the Hesperides is restored as a "prodigious garden" (460) where they participate in "the very essence of existence" (463). The naked Plotia becomes "the core of her individual essence ... scarcely any longer a body but rather a transparent intrinsic substance, no longer a woman, no longer a virgin, but rather a smile, the smile which gives meaning to everything human" (458). Virgil sees in the shining ring on her finger "the universal fusion beyond fate" and "the living oneness of the elemental substance which was his own soul" (463). The two are then joined in a sacred marriage, as she becomes "a part of himself, of his innermost seeing soul" (464).

From this point on the dying Virgil goes through a fantastic array of metamorphoses, passing back through all the forms of creation. He becomes an animal, a cosmic tree, a serpent coiled around the void at the bottom of a fountain, a giant with a star for a third eye, and finally a bodiless eye to which the "true image and the arch-image" are revealed in their oneness (477). Then he floats through the alternating light and darkness of the "liquefaction above and below" (477), before plunging into the "darkest radiation, having no quality, not even that of the crystal, but which was the essence of no quality, the borderless, universal abyss, the birthplace of all essential qualities; the middle of the star had opened, the middle of the ring: the birth-giving

nothingness, opened to the glance of the glanceless one--the seeing blindness" (479).

Thus Virgil completes his descent to the ultimate oblivion he had seen Orpheus and Aeneas as failing to reach. In being transformed from ego to soul, he becomes Hades, *Aidoneus*, the blind one in whose granary all the seed forms of existence are stored. As such, he is able to see in the mother's smile "the whole significance of the interminable occurrence" (480). The "first image, the vision of visions" is revealed to him when "the ring of time had closed and the end was the beginning" (481), leaving only a rumbling ("*rauschen*") which modulates to the music of the first word beyond human speech, before which the universe is "dissolved and acquitted ... while still being contained and preserved in it, destroyed and created forever" (481).

Hence the *nekyia* reveals the ultimate significance of life in the shape of the soul and its images. As Ernestine Schlant points out, Broch postulates through Virgil's discussions with Caesar that "the entire phenomenal world must be comprehended as symbol--and symbol only--of an ulterior reality which becomes accessible only at the moment of death" (115). At the moment of death the "*Urbild aller Bilder*" (the archetypal image of which all true images are copies) is revealed as the basis of cognition and poesis. This is Yeats' "Image that yet / fresh images begets" or his "vast image out of Spiritus Mundi" which (in Marvell's lines) "annihilates all that's made / To a green thought in a green shade."

Death, then, leads to revelation, as Virgil's descent to the underworld makes him the "vehicle rather than the conscious originator of thoughts which emerge in extended lyricisms" from what Broch called the "epistemological sphere of the unconscious" (Schlant 100). This is the "I-core", beneath the "biological and psychological layers" (Schlant 100), which Broch considered the reservoir of all possible knowledge (Schlant 176), a notion clearly analogous to the understanding of the underworld and its *eidola* as the mythogenetic field, psyche's granary. Kerenyi calls this "I-core" the entelechy; Hillman calls it the "imaginal ego" or soul (*Myth* 183-190). Broch's *nekyia* gives it inimitable voice.

Notes

¹ Many other critics have in fact focused on the myth of the underworld in the details of Lowry's life and work, with particular reference to *Under the Volcano*. Tony Kilgallon suggests that all of the many literary "references reinforce the descent into hell" (151); in addition, he places the animal symbolism (horse, dog, and scorpion) into the context of the underworld. Perle Epstein writes that "From the ending of Chapter Ten on to the close of the book Lowry combined elements from the Eleusinian mysteries and the tarot

into the pre-established Cabbalistic framework" (182), in which she is primarily interested. As evidence, she cites Lowry's letter to Jonathan Cape stating that the search for the Consul at the end of the book takes on "added meaning to anyone who knows anything of the Eleusinian mysteries" (182). Central to these mysteries, of course, was a ritual descent to the underworld. M.C. Bradbrook notes that the Farolito (the cantina outside of which the Consul is murdered at the end of the book) is "directly under the volcano, like Tartarus under Mt. Aetna with the monster Typhoeus within" (55). Her closing chapter, called "Charon's Ferry", discusses imagery relating to the crossing of the Styx, the Gates of Dis, and the various ruined palaces of the underworld (the Maison Dieu of the Tarot, the Burning House of Zen Buddhism, or Yeats' Black Tower) which inform Lowry's life and work. Richard K. Cross calls *Under the Volcano* a "Book of the Dead" and relates the various motifs of the descent (Vergil, Dante, and the labyrinth) to the theme of lost love (26-64).

² In acknowledging this parallel, it is interesting to find that Henry Hatfield compares Mann's novel to "a very active volcano" (*Masterpieces* 68).

³ A structural approach to these various levels of meaning has been an important aspect of Lowry criticism. Tony Kilgallin notes that *Under the Volcano* is the Inferno of what was to have been a Dantesque trilogy (151). *Lunar Caustic* is its Purgatorio (discussed in detail as such by Douglas Day (190-202)) and a lost novel called *In Ballast to the White Sea* was to have been what Lowry called the "paradisaical third part" (*Letters* 63). Hence, Kilgallin notes that "Lowry set out to parallel ... Dante's structural and thematic descent into hell" and suggests that the mythic allusion operates on four levels of meaning: the literal story, the allegorical application to world history and politics, the tropological level or personal or moral meaning, and the anagogical meaning "which involves a mystical or spiritual application" (151). Douglas Day proposes five levels of meaning in his search for what he calls a Gestalt reading of the novel: the chthonic and earthly level of natural and man-made images, places, and things; the human level, consisting primarily of the four major characters in the novel; the political level, referring to the Fascist victories in Spain and Mexico; a magical level of unified symbolism that integrates every detail of the novel; and a religious level concerned with eros, agape, logos, and the Consul's damnation (304-326).

⁴ In fact, the "gestalt" reading Day envisaged for the future had already been attempted by Richard Costa, who calls the Consul a "Jungian conductor" of unconscious symbols. He argues that Lowry's life and works represent the dynamic of a single archetypal motif which he names "the Everlasting Voyager" who travels on "Eridanus and Styx alike" (166).

⁵ For the complete biographical details, see Paul Michael Lutzeler, *Hermann Broch: Eine Biographie* (218-232).

Chapter Six:

Three Contemporary Books of the Dead

6.1 *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*

Three Post Modernist novels (*Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* by Doris Lessing, and *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, by Thomas Pynchon) illustrate the enduring power of this notion of creative breakdown leading to breakthrough. There is an essential continuity with Modernism in the use of the descent to the underworld, although in these later works the *nekylia* increasingly shades off towards Apocalypse. In Lessing and Pynchon we see a re-visioning of the underworld as a complex circuitry of metaphorical associations which the languages of religion, physics, chemistry and electronics employed in their works attempt to encode. In Lessing the field concept of the underworld is expressed through analogies to the pulsating vibrations of high energy physics, which shape matter and psyche into an orderly web of crystalline constellations. Pynchon uses the imagery of printed circuit cards, calculus, hieratic geometry, and hieroglyphic texts to convey his sense of the elusive order, which could be either pattern or paranoia.

Doris Lessing's novel in particular shows the persistent relevance of the myth for later writers in the Modernist vein, and sustains the linkage between shamanic illness and revelation by having its protagonist undergo his *nekylia* as a psychotic episode during a midlife breakdown. While the doctors at the mental hospital madly administer various drugs to control his mind, Professor Charles Watkins imagines himself on an extensive psychological adventure which Lessing conceives of in terms of a descent to the underworld. Watkins forgets his upperworld identity as he spins on a raft in the Atlantic, until he is carried (like one of Yeats' "blood-begotten spirits" in "Byzantium") on a dolphin's back to a fantastic tropical island (33). A "large spotted animal like a leopard" (37) appears to guide him at night to a city inhabited by strange rat-like dogs and highly libidinous apes who have huge genitals, who regularly engage in grotesque communal orgies, and whose frightening battles with the rat-dogs leave the city bloodied and covered with carcasses. That is to say, the city is a sort of inferno of fear and desire, lust and aggression.

In the middle of the city, however, Watkins finds a kind of mandala, a mysteriously potent "circle in the square" like T.S. Eliot's lotus pool in *Four Quartets*, which he instinctively clears of its carnage before the full moon in order to receive space visitors (54). But his first chance for escape is ruined when he goes into the woods outside the city, where he sees a vision of horror similar to Hans Castorp's dream of the hag temple by the sea in Mann's *The Magic Mountain*: three women dance wildly around a fire with blood smeared on their mouths and trickling down their chins from feasting on raw gobbets of a slaughtered cow. Three "bloody drunk" and crazed boys dance with them around a dead newborn thrown on a heap of meat beside a fire in the center (62-65). This infernal journey climaxes when the rat-dogs and the apes fight to the death over the city square, which Watkins again cleans off to prepare for a descent of purgatorial fire that leaves him with "a new body ... like a flame in fire" in an intensely vibrating crystal vortex swirling directly over the center of the squared circle (93).

The inferno then modulates into a granary, where the essential patterns are stored. During an "invisible dance" very similar to the one Yeats depicts in "Byzantium", the natural "city of stone and clay dissolved, leaving a ghostly city" or psychic underworld which then becomes the "pattern and a key and a blueprint for the outer city" (93). Lessing uses repetition and a variety of metaphors to reiterate the sense of an archetypal order revealed at the climax of this *nekyia*: in his "new spritely shape" Watkins understands the "inner pattern or template" upon which the outer city is modeled, an "inner blueprint" which weaves the stones of the city into a replication of the "fine inner light" (94). This "inner pattern" vibrates "on its self-spun thought" and becomes perceptible in the "finer air in this or that house or hall or public place" in the outer city (94). As with Virgil's descent in Broch's novel, "the essential shape of branch and tree is presented in white shimmering outline to eyes used to a confusion of green, lush, lively detail" (95), as Watkins experiences a "fusion with the people who were friends, companions, lovers and associates" (96).

That is to say, the transition from nature into soul crystallizes the *eidola* which shape and govern life, as Watkins feels his "new mind" merge through a series of "knowings" with the many celled honeycomb of a larger Mind (96). The "inner structure" of things is then variously compared to a "white blaze of the Crystal", to the wholeness of "colored glass in a mosaic" (96), to a "web whose every strand is linked and vibrates with every other" (97), to a "dance" which locks together "the inner pattern of light with the outer world of stone, leaf, flesh and ordinary light" (97), to a "great web of patterning oscillations and quiverings" (98), to a "delicate mesh" of "pulsing patterns" (101), and to a web of "an iron ... frightful necessity, imposing its design" on stars and atoms (105). After this dream poem of apocalyptic revelation, Watkins is whizzed upwards at great speed by an invisible force field that weaves all the planets into a dancing web of "currents of force and sympathy and

antagonism" (105). From this vantage point he watches "the change and growth and dying away of patterns" on a cosmic and microcosmic scale (105), and sees the sun as the "controlling governor" of the planets, the "ground and soul and heart and centre of this little solar system" (106).

The revelation, then, of the soul of the universe at the apex and nadir of the descent into the unconscious of Professor Charles Watkins, is expressed in terms analogous to the notion of the underworld as a mythogenetic field discussed in the introduction. Lessing has her protagonist express a scientific sense of the underworld as the sub-atomic field of shaping energy which David Bohm calls the "implicate order" and which Katherine Hayles calls the cosmic web. From this point of illumination the way up becomes the way down, as a cosmic board meeting of the archetypal powers (presided over by Jupiter) determines that it is time for the "pattern" to be fulfilled (119), and that Watkins must join a "Descent Team" to redirect mankind in the direction of "another pattern" (127). A member of the board Lessing calls Merk Ury cites the dangers of "descending into that Poisonous Hell" and mentions "previous descents" (130-131), so that the return to upperworld consciousness is envisaged from the point of view of the gods as a descent into the normal misery of human life.

As in Thomas Mann's *Prelude to the Joseph Novels*, the impression here is that the descent of the spiritual powers of the universe into the realm of man and matter is the prototypical *nekyia*, upon which all subsequent descents are modeled. Furthermore, the purpose of the descent, as Lessing conceives it, echoes Mann's Gnostic vision in the *Prelude*: it is to wake "up those of us who have forgotten what they went for" (132). In accordance with this Gnostic orientation, the return to normal consciousness is seen as a descent into hell and linked to birth: his spirit is "sucked into sound, sucked into sea" as a "good baby" is pushed out nauseous into the world (135). Watkins goes "down among the dead men" (141), and leaves the archetypal realm behind. He then proceeds to forget his mission and the scintillating crystallizations of insight during his psychotic journey, and returns to a normal life. The remainder of the book attempts to account for his breakdown in terms of "male menopause and manic depression" (177).

6.2 *The Crying of Lot 49*

This sense of the forgotten or elusive revelations of an aborted *nekyia* is also evident in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, which adapts metaphors from science, Christianity, mathematics, electronics, folktales, and myths to express the fundamental ideas intuited during the descent. Hence the novel becomes a quest for that language or myth which will give shape and significance to the anarchy and futility of the contemporary waste land (which for Pynchon becomes suburban Southern California). It is a quest shared by reader, author, and main character, as the novel dramatizes concerns about

the way fictions signify meaning. It does so in the playful, parodic manner of Post-Modernism, which combines elements of black humor and a kind of gothic revisionist approach to those myths which have traditionally given shape to life and the novel.

The descent to the underworld is the central metaphor in this short novel, the vortex of the whirlwind of allusions around which it revolves. Its protagonist Oedipa Maas becomes Persephone, the Sumerian Innana, Rapunzel, Oedipus, and a prophetess crying in the wilderness during her quest for knowledge. For it is the death of her former lover Pierce Inverarity that initiates the novel and lures Oedipa out of her Rapunzel like captivity in the world of tupperware parties and marital infidelities into the "underworld of suicides" (80) where the dense complications of the Tristero postal conspiracy hover just beyond the reach of her awareness. Pierce becomes a kind of Hades, the invisible Lord of the Dead who knows all the secrets. And it is during Oedipa's *nekyia* and attempt "to bestow life on what had persisted" of the "organized something" left behind after Pierce's "annihilation" (56) that the whole question of the existence and nature of the patterns which give shape and significance to life is raised as the central theme of the novel.

The promise of an initiatory revelation of secret knowledge (which is traditionally associated with the descent to the underworld) occurs immediately after Oedipa leaves her home in Northern California and arrives in San Narciso, a suburb of L.A., where she goes to meet Inverarity's Lawyer. She sees the "ordered swirl of houses and streets" as a "circuit card" in a transistor radio: "there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate" (14-15). Oedipa feels a "revelation" trembling "just past the threshold of her understanding", as if words she is unable to hear are being spoken "on some other frequency, or out of the eye of some whirlwind rotating too slow for her heated skin even to feel the centrifugal coolness of" (15). The word spoken in the whirlwind here combines the Biblical imagery of the Old Testament prophets, with their "revelations" in the desert (here Southern California), and the "hieroglyphics" of electronic circuitry. Pynchon adds the imagery of modern science to the psyche's granary, replenishing its repository of archetypal forms.

On her first evening in the Southland (Los Angeles, to which Oedipa has come down from Kinneret in Northern California), at the Echo Court Motel, Oedipa is seduced by Metzger, the dead Inverarity's lawyer, who here plays the role of the abductor Hades. On T.V. Oedipa sees an advertisement for Fangoso Lagoons, one of Inverarity's real estate interests, to which she will have the rights as the recipient of his legacy (remember that Hades is also the bestower of riches in the traditional imagery). When the map flashes on the screen, she catches her breath, and feels that "some immediacy was there again, some promise of hierophany: printed circuit, gently curving streets, private access to the water, Book of the Dead..." (20).

Thus her journey into the "underground of the unbalanced" quickly evokes a sense of the world as a cryptic text, a "Book of the Dead," whose "hieroglyphics" she can intuit, but not decipher. Her initial discovery of the Tristero postal symbol (the muted horn Pynchon has copied in his text) "on the latrine wall, among lipsticked obscenities" at the Scope (a bar near the Yoyodyne plant of Galactronics, Inc., another one of Inverarity's interests) reiterates this sacramental view of the world as a divine text: she copies the symbol into her address book, "thinking: God, hieroglyphics" (34). Like Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Ulysses*, Oedipa's journey is to read the "signatures of all things", and in attempting to do so, she uncovers what looks like an "American cult of the dead" (42), later in the novel associated with the "Alameda County Death Cult" (84). The Cult extends backwards 800 years to the founding of the Tristero, that clandestine postal system used by "A whole underworld of suicides who failed" (80). It is into this underworld that Oedipa is drawn by the will of her dead lover.

Her quest repeatedly evokes that sense of concealed pattern associated with Persephone's abduction into Hades: her infidelity with Metzger, which she sees as "part of ... an elaborate seduction plot" (19), "brings to an end her encapsulation in her tower" and intensifies her haunting sense of "revelations in progress all around her" (29). That is to say, rape has literally led to "revelation" in Pynchon's version of *nekyia*, although (as with Strindberg) the disturbing suspicion of incipient madness remains: the plots, systems, circuted patterns, "hieratic geometry" (37), and "coincidences blossoming these days wherever she looked" (75) could be paranoid delusions. Yet as Oedipa descends more deeply into the "underworld of suicides" (80), "revelations come crowding in exponentially, as if the more she collected the more would come to her, until everything she saw, smelled, dreamed, remembered, would somehow come to be woven into The Tristero" (56).

As the patterns continue "to emerge, having to do with the mail and how it was delivered" (61), Oedipa begins to feel "as if she had been trapped at the centre of some intricate crystal" (64), a metaphor Lessing also uses for the sense archetypal order revealed by the descent. Oedipa feels that her captivity in Rapunzel's tower has simply been replaced by her imprisonment in a tightening network of synchronicities. But if she feels trapped in an elusive web of intangible correspondences, their intricacies remain tantalizingly beyond her comprehension. All she is able to grasp is a "repetition of symbols", a string of clues each one of which "she was meant to remember" but which she is unable to interpret because she has "lost the direct, epileptic Word, the cry that might abolish the night" (81). Like the epileptic who remembers only the "signals ... sounding his seizure" and not its sacred revelations, "Oedipa wondered whether ... she too might not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcements, intimations, but never the central truth itself, which must somehow each time be too bright for her memory to hold; which must

always blaze out, destroying its own message irreversibly" (66).

If this sense of the nearly grasped yet ever receding symbol echoes the loss of Eurydice to Hades or of the flower of immortality to the serpent in *Gilgamesh*, Oedipa's experience of being stripped down to raw bone and emotional nerve during her quest also echoes the Sumerian "Descent of Innana", the oldest *nekyia* we know.¹ Like the myth, *The Crying of Lot 49* begins with a death (Gugalanna in the myth and Pierce Inverarity in the novel), and exploits the theme of the stripping of the veils as a central metaphor for the revelation of the truth that accompanies the descent to the underworld. For example, Oedipa attempts to defend herself against Metzger's seduction plot by "putting on as much as she could of the clothing" she has brought with her, "six pairs of panties in assorted colors, girdle, three pairs of nylons, three brassieres, two pairs stretch slacks, four half-slips, one black sheath, two summer dresses" and so forth (23), so that when he strips her down it takes "twenty minutes, rolling, arranging her this way and that" during which time she falls "asleep once or twice" (27). Then, while watching a floor show at the bar where the "sinister blooming of The Tristero" occurs, Oedipa compares its progressive revelation to a deathly strip-tease: "As if the breakaway gowns, net bras, jewelled garters and G-strings of historical figuration that would fall away were layered dense as Oedipa's own street-clothes in that game with Metzger in front of the Baby Igor movie; as if a plunge towards dawn indefinite black hours long would indeed be necessary before The Tristero could be revealed in its terrible nakedness" (36). And would it then be coy, she wonders, or "would it instead, the dance ended ... its luminous stare locked to Oedipa's, smile gone malign and pitiless" bend to her and "speak words she never wanted to hear?" (36).

In the Sumerian myth, Innana also prepared for her descent to the Queendom of Ereshkigal by putting on royal robes and crown, breastplate and beaded necklace, make up and golden ring, and by taking measuring rod and line in hand. And one by one, at each of the seven gateways into the underworld, these symbols of her power and being in the world are taken away, until, like Oedipa, she faces Ereshkigal in her terrible nakedness: the eye of death is fastened upon her, and the word of wrath is spoken against her (Wolkstein and Kramer 53-60). Innana returns, after being hung up on a peg for three days and three nights, with the "demons of the underworld" clinging to her side. These are the *galla*, who kill her husband Dumuzi as her substitute. Similarly, when Oedipa returns home to Kinneret by the Sea, her psychiatrist (Dr. Hilarius) is psychopathic, her husband tripped out on LSD, her lover Metzger gone off to marry a 14 year old in Las Vegas, and Randy Driblette, one of her guides to the Tristero underworld, drowned in the Pacific. Pynchon again returns to the metaphor of stripping to express her terror of the abyss at this point: "They are stripping from me, she said subvocally -- feeling like a fluttering curtain in a very high window, moving up to then out over the abyss -- they are stripping away, one by one, my men" (105).

But unlike Innana, Oedipa's journey has no closure, her wisdom no substance. She is left wondering whether she has stumbled "on to a secret richness and concealed density of dream" or whether "a plot has been mounted against her" so "labyrinthine that it must have meaning", or whether she is hallucinating, "fantasying some such plot" and "out of her skull" (117-118)--a question Strindberg had also asked during his Inferno crisis. Where the question of ultimate significance is left unasked by the myth, in the novel Oedipa is left "walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above ... right and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless. Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth" (125). Only the descent of a miraculous angel, speaking the Pentecostal, epileptic Word that would inflame all tongues and make intelligible the many languages spoken in the novel (technological, religious, medical, philatelic, mathematical, literary) can say which, and Oedipa stands waiting for its "rare, random descent" (Sylvia Plath's words) at the stamp auction where the novel ends.

6.3 Gravity's Rainbow

Pynchon's most recent novel continues in the playful but at the same time gothic mode of parody in its evocation of myth and folktale as a means of giving shape to his sprawling, anarchic material. Like Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, this encyclopaedic work begins with a descent to the dream kingdom of Hades, which establishes the central myth of the novel's quest. In the first chapter, Pirate Prentice dreams about a "rush of souls" descending on a subway train to "some vast, very old and dark hotel" (4) corresponding to the palace of Hades in the Latin tradition coming down from Virgil. The souls are sequestered off into "thousands of ... hushed rooms without light" to wait for the "judgement from which there is no appeal" (4). Indeed, the novel is suffused throughout with an occult sense of the dead as shaping presences in its "plot", the languages of chemistry and rocket technology are added to his arsenal of metaphors, and there is, as in *The Crying of Lot 49*, a sense that the final revelation will come with a V-2 rocket in a terrifying burst of transcendent light that will annihilate all awareness and memory of what is revealed.

Although Pynchon's revisionings of the *nekyia* are by turns playful, parodie, grotesque, and often terrifying (his extraordinary signature as a novelist), they share the quest for the revelation of patterns of meaning evident in the Modernist texts discussed in the previous chapters. The second explicit descent in the novel is typical of the complex tone of Pynchon's reworkings of the myth. It occurs during Slothrop's "narcosis", when he is hypnotized and drugged in an effort to explore the subconscious roots of racism in the mind of a New Englander. During his hallucinatory reverie he imagines himself being flushed down the toilet by Malcolm X in the Roseland Ballroom. After his harmonica goes, Slothrop swiftly but reluctantly follows the "harp's descent

toward stone white cervix and into lower night" (63). Yet even in the seatological mire of Pynchon's underworld, where "Decline and fall works silently No sun, no moon, only a smooth sinewaving of the light" (67), a sense of hieroglyphic revelation emerges: the shit crusted on the sewage walls hardens into "patterns thick with meaning, Burma-Shave signs of the toilet world, icky and sticky, cryptic and glyptic" (65).

For Pynchon, "feelings about blackness were tied to feelings about shit, and feelings about shit to feelings about putrefaction and death" (276), so that his linkage of *nekyia* and excrement follows the kind of archetypal logic Hillman discusses in *The Dream and the Underworld* in the sections on "Black" and "Mud and Diarrhea" (144-146; 183-185). He notes the "descriptions of the underworld as a realm of mushy or fecal matter" in Plato and Aristophanes, and reminds us that "to the Egyptian underworld imagination, the dead walked upside down so that the stuff of their bowells came out through their mouths" (183). The imagery is totally appropriate to *Gravity's Rainbow*, where the descent is frequently associated with an excremental vision.

Although it is quite clear that Pynchon plays around here with the relationship between signifier and signified in a way that lends itself to Post-Modernist or deconstructive analysis, it is equally clear that his sense of the mythic dimensions of the modern quest for meaning could come right out of Joyce's "Circe" chapter in *Ulysses*. The need to interpret the patterns of meaning behind such experiences as the toilet bowl descent informs Slothrop's quest throughout *Gravity's Rainbow*. Pynchon, in fact, is only a little more extreme than Mann or Joyce in his irony and sense of play, but no less serious than these Modernist precursors in his sense of the importance of myth as a shaping power of the mind. Nor is he less synergetic than they in the diversity of allusions employed to give shape and significance to his material (the Grail romances, Near-Eastern, Egyptian, Biblical, Greek, and German myths and folktales, occult and Kabbalistic systems). His is a pluralistic, polycentric view of psyche's granary, which continually returns to Hades in its imagery and plot.

Another example occurs in the famous scene of Brigadier Pudding's ritual coprophagia at the feet of Katje in the depths of "The White Visitation," where research in psychological and occult warfare is being conducted. In the midnight scene, "Old Pudding must negotiate half a dozen offices or anterooms before reaching his destination" (231). Each room contains "a single unpleasantness for him: a test he must pass" (231); these include a hypodermic outfit; an empty red tin of Savarin coffee, which Pudding reads as Severin, the "name of the self-abasing male victim in Sacher-Masoch's book *Venus im Pelz*" (Fowler 143); a file-drawer of case histories left open with a copy of Krafft-Ebing partly visible; a human skull; a malacca cane; and in the sixth antechamber the corpse of a "tattered Tommy up on White Sheet Ridge" hanging from the rafters, "uniform burned in Maxim holes black-rimmed as the eyes of Cleo" (231-232).

In the seventh cell Katje waits for him, "Domina Nocturna ... shining mother and last love" (232). She is naked underneath a black uniform, and her eyes have been elaborately made up: she "has spent an hour at her vanity mirror with mascara, liner, shadow, and pencil, lotions and rouges, brushes and photographs of the reigning beauties of thirty or forty years ago" (233). She will then flagellate Pudding with the malacca cane, while he strips and kisses her boots, before taking the "last mystery" of Katje's turds into his mouth, "thinking of a Negro penis" while "The stink of shit floods his nose ... the smell of Passchendaele, of the Salient. Mixed with mud, and the putrefaction of corpses, it was the sovereign smell of their first meeting, and her emblem" (235). Hence Pudding's pathology combines memories of the disastrous Battle of the Ypres Salient at Passchendaele, where 300,000 young Englishmen were killed or wounded fighting for "five miles of Belgian mud" (Fowler 144), with a coprophagic bisexuality.

The underworld here is the unconscious of the male patriarchy, the dark current of the military industrial complex Pynchon holds responsible for our present apocalyptic conditions. It is an underworld imagined in Sumerian and masonic terms. Pudding's ritual descent takes him through the seven chambers of the underworld to an encounter with the mother goddess of death, "blessed Metatron keeper of the Secret guardian of the throne" (231). Douglas Fowler points out the allusions to "some Chapel Perilous housing the Grail of Redeeming Pain" and notes that "Seven is a magic number and so it is in the seventh chamber that Pudding will find his Queen of the Night" (143). But even more explicit is the allusion to the descent of the Sumerian goddess Innana through the seven gateways of the *kur* to Ereshkigal, the goddess of the underworld who "fastened on Innana the eye of death" and turned her into a "corpse, / A piece of rotting meat" to be "hung from a hook on the wall" (Wolkstein and Kramer 60). Pynchon's Pudding also is stripped down through seven chambers to encounter a rotting corpse before facing Katje's eye of death and sex.

Although as we shall see the Sumerian configurations of the underworld goddess of death continue in the novel, the next major nexus of mythic allusions constellates around the figures on the *Anubis*, a barge floating along the Post-War Rhine which Slothrop boards during his quest for the mysteries of the V-2 rocket. The barge sports "a gilded winged jackal under the bowsprit" (459); the "only being aboard that can see through the fog," it stares above the "Springtime corpses" churning below in the wreckage of the river (468). Anubis, of course, is the jackal headed deity of the Egyptians who conducts the dead to their judgement; as we have seen in the discussion of Mann's *Joseph* novels, Osiris, the lord and judge of the dead, rides his barge down the Nile to the underworld, as Joseph does when thrown into prison by the Pharaoh. In this extended sequence among the wild orgies on the *Anubis*, Miklos Thanatz tells Slothrop his first eyewitness account of the early German

experiments with the rocket. Thanatz is the husband of Greta Erdmann, Slothrop's most recent lover, as well as guide and initiator into the revelries on the *Anubis*.²

Like Osiris, with whom Isis has intercourse while he is dead (by providing him with a wooden phallus to replace the natural member swallowed by a fish), Thanatz describes the rocket's "virile roar" and "eruel, hard, thrusting into the virgin blue robes of the sky" as "Oh, so phallic" (465). Also like Osiris, he is preoccupied not only with sex and death, but also with judgement: "We are weighed in the balance and found wanting," he says to Slothrop over a glass of absinthe, "and the Butcher has had His thumb in the scales" (465). The imagery of the last judgement as a balancing of the scales, in which the weight of the heart is measured against the feather of the truth (*Maat*) is, of course, a favorite scene in the Egyptian Books of the Dead. In fact, we first see Thanatz with "full beard, eyebrows feathering out like trailing edges of hawk's wings, drinking absinthe out of a souvenir stein on which, in colors made ghastly by the carnival lights on deck, bony and giggling Death is about to surprise two lovers in bed" (464). The image establishes the linkage of Thanatz and death (as of course does his name as well), anticipates the action of the episode (Death will indeed surprise Slothrop by taking the young Bianca from him after he makes love to her), and alludes again to Osiris, whose son Horus is a hawk headed deity, here touched on by the hawk wing eyebrows.

If Thanatz is Lord of the Dead, his wife Greta, from whom he is separated much of the year, must then be a Goddess of Death. That Thanatz is also suspected lover of Bianca, his daughter by Greta, suggests the Demeter-Hades-Persephone configuration of the Greek underworld, since as Kerenyi tells us "Zeus mated with Persephone's mother--and later with Persephone herself" (*Gods* 252), and Hades was a subterranean form of Zeus (*Gods* 230). Greta then becomes both Demeter and Persephone, the Earth Goddess as the womb and tomb of all life, a complex fully exploited by Pynchon in his characterization of her. Slothrop had dreamed of Greta as the womb of all things living earlier in Berlin: "at the bottom of the river. She has drowned. But all forms of life fill her womb From out of her body streams a flood now of different creatures, octopuses, reindeer, kangaroos, 'Who can say all the life / That left her womb that day?'" (447). Out of her death, that is to say, comes her "earth mother fecundity" (Fowler 196), and her drowning in this scene anticipates her daughter Bianca's presumed drowning at the end of the *Anubis* episode.

Later in the novel Greta is clearly seen as a Goddess of Death, as a "destroying goddess" (494) become psychopathic child murderer. After the orgies on the *Anubis* subside, Slothrop chats with one Ensign Morituri, a Japanese naval officer who had discovered Greta drowning a boy in a pool of mud outside the German spa Bad Karma. Greta had left a film career to go there for the mud cures, where she was haunted by visions of the Gestapo and

developed "psychogenic ... pains, ties, hives and nausea" (475). It was during the summer before the War, an "oncirie season" full of dreaming "sleepwalkers" (475). Like Ereshkigal in the Sumerian *kur* (surely a pun Pynchon would be capable of!), Greta's "scrutable eyes" burn horribly while the "Kur-Orchestra played selections from *The Merry Widow*" (478). Morituri followed her one night out to "the edge of the black mud pool: that underground presence, old as Earth, partly enclosed back at the Spa" where she will attempt to murder a boy with hair like "cold snow" (477).

In this scene, Greta identifies herself with "the Kabbalistic 'Shekinah,' the feminine aspect of God" (Fowler 196), as she speaks to her offering:

'You know who I am too. My home is the form of Light I wander all the Diaspora looking for strayed children, I am Israel. I am the Shekinah, queen, daughter, bride, and mother of God. And I will take you back, you fragment of smashed vessel, even if I must pull you by your nasty little circumcised penis.' (478)

Shekinah, Ereshkigal, Innana, Demeter, Persephone, Gretel: Greta herself acknowledges that she "had more identities than she knew what to do with" (482), but they all emerge from, and return to the underworld. She is that "destroying goddess" Slothrop's friend Springer tried to deny she was, the mother, lover, and daughter of death. "One of the veils she has shed", Pynchon says, alluding to Innana's stripping of the veils on her journey downward, was an insomniac sleepwalker who found a corpse in nighttime Berlin which she takes in her arms to hear the secrets of the dead: "We live very far beneath the black mud," it tells her, "Days of traveling It's so dark that things glow. We have flight. There's no sex. But there are fantasies" (483).

Greta's daughter, then, must inevitably participate in the mysteries of her mother, and in fact she will disappear shortly after making love to Slothrop on board the *Anubis*. That she disappears along with her father Thanatz suggests the abduction of Persephone into the kingdom of death, but the most explicit allusion here is to Orpheus and Eurydice. Slothrop becomes obsessed with "The last instant their eyes were in touch" before guessing she's been drowned by her mother (471). Like Orpheus, her look before submersion into the kingdom of shades haunts Slothrop, and summons the shades of memory, of having "looked for how many Last Times up in the rearview mirror" while a kid in New England driving away from how many first loves. That he sees them in the rearview mirror is surely a tribute to Cocteau's film *Orpheus*, which imagines Orpheus losing Eurydice by looking at her in the rear view mirror of his car. In the novel, Slothrop's reverie evokes music, appropriate to his Orphean role, as he imagines a girl who "looked at him once ... from down at the end of a lunchwagon counter" while he hears "off the jukebox a quick twinkle in the bleat of a trombone, a reed section, planting swing notes precisely into the groove between silent midpoint and next beat" (471). Like

all those memories, Bianca fades among the lost, below deck behind the "ravening jackal," and it "begins to hurt to bring her back. But there is this Eurydice-obsession, this bringing back out of ... though how much easier just to leave her there, in fetid carbide and dead-canary soups of breath" (472).

While this scene on the *Anubis* is the most star-studded constellation of mythic allusions to Hades, the novel is haunted throughout by the presence of the invisible one and his attendant shades. In fact, Pynchon repeatedly suggests the supernatural presence of the dead as the daimones directing the action of the plot and controlling the lives of characters who mistakenly believe they are acting independently, but are in fact being guided by "Them" towards ends beyond their conscious knowledge. Awareness of the presence of the dead comes through seances in which information about Rocket technology and the elaborate power hierarchies of the afterlife (which use the living as pawns in Their inscrutable plots). In this sense, the novel has much in common with James Merrill's *The Changing Light at Sandover*, a long epic exploration of the afterlife which shades off increasingly towards Apocalypse as the poem develops.

Information about the underworld also comes through dreams and straight narrative vision. Slothrop dreams of his dead friend Tantivy Mucker-Maffick dancing in a "space of lawn ... with a village band and many of the women dressed in white ... it seems to be underground, not exactly a grave or a crypt" (551-552). Slothrop will also eventually dissolve "among the Zone's lost" (470). Another long chapter describes Pirate Prentice in Hell, done very much in the way of Ezra Pound's *Hell Cantos*, with a focus on the greeds and lusts for power in the Inferno, and alluding to Eliot's borrowings from Dante: "Who would have thought so many would be here?" is the say Pynchon puts it (537). Though the scene is rather weak in its reliance on cartoon imagery, it does locate the "infernal committees that run the Rocket, the IG, and oil cartels" (Fowler 211) in the underworld.

For the quest for the pattern that will give shape and significance to Slothrop's quest inexorably leads him into Hades, and here the patterns revealed concern an international cartel "cutting across every agency human and paper that ever touched it" whose secret dealings Slothrop carries within him as a "personal doom ... always to be held at the edges of revelations" (566). Slothrop discovers that his father had sold him for experimental studies with a chemical known as Imipolex G, in order to pay for his Harvard education. The experiment involved a process whereby the infant Slothrop was conditioned to have an erection when smelling the chemical; when the response was reversed, it took him "beyond the Zero" so that in his adult life he has an erection in advance of the explosion of the V-2 rocket, which used the chemical as part of its mechanism. Slothrop's discovery of the patterns of his life then, of his identity or "personal doom" as he calls it, coincides with his death and "scattering across the Zone" before the novel ends. His end is in his beginning.

Though Pynchon's wildly playful, parodic handling of the Hades complex, or "Eurydice-obsession" as Slothrop calls it, clearly goes far beyond many of the earlier Modernists discussed above (with the exception of Joyce), it nevertheless comes right out of their tradition. The polyvalent diversity of allusions brought together in the text to revolve around the central vortex of the underworld recalls Lawrence, Mann, Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Yeats, all of whom used a complex range of allusions to variety of mythological systems to order their material. Furthermore, Pynchon also makes Hades not only the locus of infernal torments, but also the granary where the archetypal patterns giving shape to the narrative arc stored. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, the patterns can either be the delusive systems of paranoia, the actual plottings of an international conspiracy of the Elite, or a random "anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long" (434)--including, perhaps the reader.

Slothrop himself opts for the "reason" behind the patterns, even though it promises annihilation (434). It is a part of his ancestral heritage to do so, "a Puritan reflex of seeking orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia" (188). Like the interpreter of the Rorschach blot, like Pynchon himself, and like the reader as well, Slothrop will "seek to impose structure" on the "shape-less blob of experience," even though the process of "structuring this blob" may tell us more about the "dreams, fan-tasies, the deepest regions of" the minds of author, character, and reader than it does about reality (81). Throughout Slothrop's descent into the Post World War II Zone, we hear of the patterns or *eidola* of Hades. Like the Argentinians Slothrop meets in Zurich, "We are obsessed with building labyrinths, where before there was open plain and sky. To draw ever more complex patterns on the blank sheet. We cannot abide that openness: it is terror to us" (264). The Rocket is repeatedly associated with "destiny" and a "sinister cryptography of naming, a sparse pattern but one that harshly will not be denied" (322). Yet the Rocket, like the novel, continually threatens to dissolve into the entropic underworld, into an "Aggregat of pieces of dead matter, no longer anything that can move, or that has a Destiny with a shape" (362). At other times, "everything fits. One sees how it fits, ja? learns patterns, adjusts to rhythms" (494) and sees revealed in the depths of the Zone "a cosmic design of darkness and light" (495).

This is fundamentally then, and most urgently, a novel about the quest for meaning, and the role the myth of Hades plays in that quest. It stretches the boundaries between the bizarre details of daily life (its anarchy and futility no where more effectively conveyed), and the mythic structures giving them shape and significance (and offering the hope for a redeemed waste land). The primary difference between *Gravity's Rainbow* and its Modernist precursors is in its extensive reliance on the imagery of science and technology, but even Joyce had made moves in that direction in his catechism chapter of *Ulysses*.

One cannot cite differences of tone or irony, for both Joyce and Mann manipulated their mythic materials with extraordinarily wry wit and even grotesque parody. Modernism was in essence a fusion of "myth and irony a poetics that gave up nothing of literature's bardic daring despite the doubts and subversions of enlightened thought" (Hartman 145). Nor can one urge the earnest seriousness of Yeats or Eliot as differentiating their work from Pynchon's: *Gravity's Rainbow*, like the *Four Quartets*, ends with the suggestion that the final revelation will come only with annihilation: for Pynchon, as for Eliot, the Dove and the Bomb are one.

Notes

¹ For a quick, superficial overview of the literary history of the descent to the underworld, which begins with the Egyptian and Sumerian material, but ends where my discussion begins, see the chapter on the "Unterweltsbesuch" in Elizabeth Frenzel's *Motive der Weltliteratur*.

² Hillman's discussion of revelry in dreams notes the Heraclitean equation of Hades and Dionysus, a very appropriate archetypal context for approaching *Gravity's Rainbow*, and especially the orgy scenes on board the *Anubis*. Hillman suggests that revelry in dreams removes "the dream-ego from daily life to a seeing through of its standards in rebellion" (*Dream* 177). The carnival becomes a "moment of psychisation that removes the naturalistic attitude" (177-178).

Chapter Seven

Re-Visioning the Elysian Fields: Physics, Painting, and Thanatology

7.1 The New Physics: "The Hidden Underworld"

The discovery of what Jacob Bronowski called the "hidden underworld within the material world" (123) by modern science came to a dramatic climax in the earlier decades of the Modernist period when Einstein published his theories of relativity and along with Niels Bohr laid the foundations of quantum mechanics (330-343). Bronowski calls this endeavor the "great collective work of art of the twentieth century" and points out that "the notion that there is an underlying structure, a world within the world of the atom, captured the imagination of artists at once" (330). Niels Bohr, in fact, collected cubist paintings by artists like Picasso, Braque, and Franz Marc, in which "the interest has shifted from the skin and the features to the underlying geometry" (332). In the search for the "hidden structure," objects are "taken apart into mathematical shapes and then put together as a reconstruction, a re-creation, from the inside out" (332). This led to a new kind of painting, as radically different from its past as was the new science or Modernist literature from its past.

In science, the shift from mechanistic physics to the quantum relativity of Einstein and Bohr coincided with the Modernist epiphanies of Hades discussed above. Thomas Kuhn's idea of the paradigm shift is very useful in understanding this radical shift in perspective. The breakdown of the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm in favor of a holistic view of the universe helps us to see the radical developments in Modernist art, music, literature, psychology, and science as being part of a unified whole. Stanislav Grof and Fritjof Capra both provide illuminating discussions of these recent developments in science, which began with the shift from mechanistic physics to the quantum-relativistic physics inaugurated by Einstein and Bohr, whose careers are coterminous with Modernism (say, 1905, the year of Einstein's first publication on relativity theory, to the 1930's, when Bohr, Einstein, and Enrico Fermi worked out the details of the new physics).

The mechanistic view of the universe can be briefly described as one of a world composed of solid particles of indestructible matter, discrete in time and space, which provide the building blocks of life forms. The image of the universe operative in this model is the machine, or clock, set in motion by a now absent God, who simply allows his creation to run endlessly on according to the laws of physics. Consciousness itself is seen to be an accidental product of material evolution, and mind and matter are strictly separate. Recent developments in science, however, have considerably modified this view. Modern physics has discovered that beneath the appearances of material phenomena exists a dimension of energy fields organized in abstract patterns of activity. Hence what looks like solid matter is more fundamentally empty, energetic fields informed by the patterns of consciousness. (Capra 53-97; Grof, "Ancient Wisdom").

Following English physicist David Bohm, Ken Wilbur writes that "physical entities which seemed to be separate and discrete in time and space are actually linked or unified in an implicit or underlying fashion" (2). In Bohm's terms, "under the explicate realm of separate things and events is an implicate realm of undivided wholeness" (2). Hence a table top, let's say, which appears to be a solid object discretely isolated in time and space from all other physical objects is actually the manifest or explicate form of molecular fields of energy through which the table participates in the underlying dynamic of all things, which Bohm calls the implicate order. The emphasis on the implicate order, seen as the underlying connection between all things, is analogous to our emphasis here on the underworld and its *eidola*. As Capra puts it, the newest theories suggest that "consciousness may well be an essential aspect of the universe" (96), and that "the observed patterns of matter are reflections of patterns of mind" (93). That is to say, matter is inherently psychological, and its realities can only be approximated through myths, metaphors, and models.

All of these developments can be seen to be of a piece, and reflect the paradigm shift basic to Modernism as a whole. Katherine Hayles, uses the term "field concept" to refer to the implicate order, and applies it to the literary work of Pirsis, Lawrence, Nabokov, Borges, and Pynchon. She suggests "that well known developments in the modern novel are part of a larger paradigm shift within the culture to the field concept" (24). This revival of an ancient vision of unity in multiplicity has been called holographic, to indicate a reality in which "each individual part of the picture contains the whole picture in condensed form. The part is in the whole, and the whole is in the part" (Wilbur 2). Perhaps the closest literary analogy to this holonomic principle is the Yeatsian lyric, based on the symbolist movement. As David Perkins writes, "the symbolist poet avoids plot and assumes that reality is ultimately 'spirit' or 'soul'," and proceeds by juxtaposing alien things unified by an "intuition of organic unity" (51). Hence in Yeats' opus, every poem is a part of the whole, and the whole is in every part. The unity is provided by those recurrent systems of symbolic images discussed above as nodal points of

the mythogenetic fields of the underworld.

Furthermore, the de-substantiation of the solid world described by the new physics, and subsequent discovery of underlying patterns of informing energy resembling "thought systems" more than a machine (Sir James Jeans, qtd. in Grof "Ancient Wisdom" 22), follows very closely James Hillman's shift from an ego psychology, based on the dynamic of instinctual forces derived from mechanistic physics, to an archetypal psychology, based on the soul as a poetic substratum of consciousness. Thomas Mann shares this view when he writes that "the metaphysician and the psychologist" share the same mystery: "the soul is the giver of all given conditions" (*Essays* 426) and the primary source of metaphor, myth, and symbolic images. Bettina Knapp calls this mythogenetic region of soul the *oneirosphere*, a sub or supra stratum of consciousness constantly producing the dreams, images and phantasies which form the elemental basis of cognition, behaviour, and creativity (5). Henri Corbin calls it the *mundus imaginalis*, "a distinct field of imaginal realities requiring methods and perceptual faculties different from the spiritual world beyond it or the empirical world of usual sense perception" (Hillman, *Archetypal* 3).

Recently, the English biologist Rupert Sheldrake has used the term morphogenetic field to designate these invisible systems of energy which underly the physical world and give its development direction and coherence. Sheldrake argues that the fields which determine organic development are derived from past members of the same species (the concept is analogous to Jung's notion of the archetype as formulated by countless repetitions of the behavioural patterns and experiences of previous generations). He describes these energy fields as non-physical causal factors functional to organic development, and relates them to the older biological concept of the "entelechy ... a Greek word whose derivation (en-telos) indicates something which bears its end or goal in itself" (46).

In the context of an archetypal poetics of Modernism, I am suggesting that individual works emerge in much the same way in a dynamic interplay of basic symbolic structures of a transpersonal imagination (structures which Yeats also argued derive from the daimonic shades of the dead-past members of the species) and the mind and personality of the artist who receives and transmits the program. That is why Thomas Mann experienced his novels as developing spontaneously according to their own will, and yet also as an expression of his essential nature (*A Sketch* 18). Karl Kerényi, as noted, also used the term "entelechy" to denote a "fundamental gestalt" in Mann's work, which he personified in the figure of Hermes, the guide of souls to the underworld (*Mythology* 12).

This paradigm shift, which for Grof and Capra is analogous to such earlier shifts discussed by Thomas Kuhn as the transition from a geocentric to a

heliocentric view of the solar system, is supported by developments in neuropsychology (Karl Pribram), chemistry (Illya Prigogine), evolutionary theory (Erich Jantsch), the study of planetary ecosystems (Margulis and Lovelock) and transpersonal psychology (Grof). Fritjof Capra synthesizes all of these developments under the rubric of the "systems view of life" (265-304). Its emphasis is on the "implicate order" of underlying patterns and webs by which all things are connected and interrelated, and it is analogous to the sense of the underworld and its *eidola* discussed in detail above. For both science and literature, Hades is the god who holds the keys to the granary in which the mythic structures of life are stored.

7.2 Modernist Painting

In Modernist painting this shift in interest from the surface appearance to the hidden structures of matter also yields a sense of underlying fields of energy which shape the art work. All of the great practitioners of Modern painting (Picasso, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Klee, Chagall, Miro) began with the same kind of naturalistic art as we see in the earlier phases of Modernist literature, and gradually evolve towards the non-objective abstractions analogous to the "use of myth in Joyce or Cocteau, or the use of folk-tale in Mann" (Frye 31). In their painting, the natural world is dramatically reduced to elemental forms which then provide the basis for "re-creation, from the inside out" (Bronowski 332). It is a process of creative dissolution which parallels the descent to the underworld in literature; and in fact, several of the paintings of Kandinsky, Klee, and Chagall allude directly to Hades in their imagery.¹

Wassily Kandinsky began his career painting naturalistic scenes like the "Park at St. Cloud" of 1906. Though the palette reflects recent fauvist and impressionist experimentations in color and light, the painting is nevertheless clearly recognizable as an objective representation of the sunlight filtering through a lane of trees on a lovely afternoon in the park. The blotches of color smeared on the canvas with dabbing brush strokes, however, is an indication of what is to come. "Couple on Horseback" of 1903 is even more pointillistic in its application of small dots of color, which nevertheless build up to a clearly recognizable, though fairy-tale like scene. The work is both naturalistic and mythic, much in the way of Joyce's *Dubliners*. Color, like the minute particles of atomic matter, is the basic building block of the scene. A young man and woman clothed in medieval costume ride a richly caparisoned horse in the foreground of the painting, apparently a park on this side of a river separating the lovers from a multi-spired and onion-domed Russian village in the background of the painting. On the river midground we see a single sail crossing towards us from the village.

Though the scene is in a sense naturalistic and representational, the

beginnings of what in literature will become the mythic method is clearly evident. We see two lovers separated from the concerns of daily life, symbolized by the city: they have crossed the river to the yonder shore of myth and folktale. In this connection, it is worth pointing out the delicate allusions to the abduction of Persephone on the horse drawn chariot of Hades, which removes her from the safety of familiar surroundings into the realm of sex and death.

In "Night" of 1906-07, the descent into the realm of the mythic is even more pronounced, in as much as the painting is a delightful depiction of what Robert Graves called the Triple Goddess (in Russian folklore appearing as the popular witch Baba Yaga). In the left side of the composition, a mother stands beneath a purple crescent moon combing a long strand of blond hair with her left hand, and extending her right hand to the young daughter standing at her feet to the left. Her long black robe is studded with white splotches of stars, like Isis in the heavens in the vision of Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*. An old hobbled witch emerges from the far right hand side of the painting, holding a cane in her left hand, and beckoning to the mother (whose hair extends towards her across the middle of the composition) with the crooked index finger of her left hand. She wears a dark robe with golden crescents and purple circles, representing again the stages of the lunar cycle. This is the Triple Goddess (Virgin, Mother, and Crone) so often described in her dual capacities of creation and destruction in Modernist literature (as in the works of Eliot, Lawrence, Mann, Pynchon, and Lessing). In this painting, the crone clearly beckons us into the underworld secrets of her mysterious night. The scene remains objective, but increasingly mythic. The tendency towards pure abstract fields of color is even more pronounced: trees and fields are single blotches of black, purple, brown, gray, and red.

"Lyrical" of 1911 is one of Kandinsky's last representational pieces, with the movement towards abstraction very far along. We see a horse and rider done very much in the manner of the Paleolithic cave paintings of Lascaux. A few lines and splashes of color are sufficient to render the attenuated outlines of the bodies moving rapidly through what is largely empty space. The regression to the primitive origins of art in the scene corresponds to the reduction of painting to its basic elements (color, circle, line, and empty space). These elements will become the 'subject matter' of the new abstraction of self-reflective painting, and the building blocks of reconstruction. The horse, again, has mythical overtones and a traditional connection with Hades, as well as with the Apocalypse, a linkage explicitly treated by Kandinsky in "Horseman of the Apocalypse" of the same year. In this scene, an expressionistically elongated rider plunges a primitive club over the cowering heads of people on earth during the last day, while another rider wields a bow and arrow. As Kenneth Lindsay suggests, "the horseman who rushes onward, engages in battle, and appears in religious contexts of destruction and change is the symbol of Kandinsky's historic breakthrough into non-objective art" (63). Apocalypse

meant both an ending and a new beginning, a doom and a revelation.

After the War, Kandinsky's work is pure abstraction. The breakdown of the naturalistic mode and the reduction of painting to the elements of its "hidden structure" has been completed, and the process of "re-creation" begins. As Michel Lacoste points out, the splitting of the atom was one of the events "at the origin of Kandinsky's conversion to non-objective painting" (40). A new kind of painting had to be reconstructed out of the very ashes of the old, just as for Lawrence a new identity and literature emerged from the flaming demise of the Phoenix. Pure color, circles, spheres, and lines become the pure forms in Kandinsky's post-War compositions: we have moved from ego to *eidos*, from realism to myth, from nature to spirit (a fundamental concern of Kandinsky's aesthetics). He called the paintings of his later years *microcosmoi*, little worlds made cunningly of interrelated fields of colored shapes, lines, and empty space, revolving about each other much like electrons around nuclei in the vast spaces of molecular galaxies.

To arrive at these fundamental forms of painting, Kandinsky had to revert through myth to the primal origins of art in Lascaux. His was a process of creative retrogression to what Lawrence called the "original levels" of consciousness, a "deliberate return in order to get back to the roots again, for a new start" (*Apocalypse* 96). In a sense, it was a kind of alchemical opus, a deliberate breaking down of the base materials of nature to their elements, so that new purified forms of the spirit could be created. Kandinsky saw through the surface of the world to its "underlying geometry" (Bronowski 332), an underworld of archetypal forms which he called the "essence" or "content" lying "beneath the skin of nature" (qtd. in Shapiro 205). It was an endeavor as contrary to the materialistic principles of naturalism in the arts as the mythic method was to the prevailing "anarchy and futility of contemporary history" (Eliot, "Ulysses").

Piet Mondrian shared Kandinsky's sympathies for the spiritual aspects of painting, and he was similarly motivated by occultism and theosophy (Shapiro 204, 246). Like Kandinsky, he began with a kind of representational naturalism colored by a fauvist palette, and proceeded through a dissolution of natural forms towards a discovery of the basic elements of painting analogous to the *eidola* of Hades. Out of the reduction of his art to its fundamental elements, a new kind of painting emerges which attempts not to represent objects in the external world, but to represent those "pure relations" which had been "veiled" in older painting by the particulars of nature" (Shapiro 235).

Mondrian's early paintings depict a pastoral simplicity and beauty, using the farming landscapes of his native Holland to symbolize a kind of natural harmony. His intense focus on the external surfaces of the natural world led, however, to its de-substantiation and the revelation of the pure relations of abstract geometries beneath its external appearances. In Mondrian's development

we have a particularly vivid and dramatic illustration of what Hillman calls the movement "'in' to soul and 'out' of life" which "gives a sense of primordiality, of beginning at the beginning" (*Dream* 132). It occurs through the "deformative" operations of the imagination upon the surfaces of the natural world, in Mondrian's case represented by a single great, almost archetypal tree. We can follow the dissolution of this tree into the elementary forms of an abstract reality in a series of paintings begun before the First World War.

"Landscape With Farmhouse" of 1906 shows a magnificent elm spreading its branches over a farmhouse at sunset, with the scene reflected in the river waters in the foreground. The painter and the viewer, that is to say, are on the other shore, at one remove from the substantiality of natural life. The painting is divided almost exactly in half, horizontally across the middle of the canvas, between reality and reflection. In subsequent paintings, reality increasingly dissolves into reflection, where, it is suggested, the essences beneath the surface are to be revealed. Nature continues to dissolve into twilight in "Farm at Duivendrecht" of 1905, and "Trees on the Gein with Rising Moon" of 1907-08 seems to suggest a logical progression taking us out of the solid shapes of daylight and into the evocative forms of night. In this scene the carefully articulated branch systems of the single tree in "Landscape With Farmhouse" have dissolved into the undifferentiated swaths of the dark pigment of five trees on a spacious red background, with their reflections wavering in the bottom foreground waters of the Gein.

"The Red Tree" of 1909 removes the grand elm from any superfluous details of landscape, setting it instead against an unspecified blue space. It is as if the sap of the tree is blood, or lava, flowing into the spreading arteries of the tree branches, and suggesting a kind of bleeding away of life. The paintings shows the reduction of means to two essential colors, one predominant form, and a composition based on the horizontal and vertical lines which Mondrian saw as "similes of spirit and matter" (Shapiro 246). Space is undifferentiated, and more nearly empty, as in Kandinsky's little worlds. "The Gray Tree" of 1912 shows an even more austere reduction of painting to its elements: colors to gray and black, space taken out of nature and reduced to pure color, and the branches of the tree, though still recognizable, more line than image. By the time we have reached "The Flowering Tree" of 1912, the only recognizable natural form is in the title, stem and branches now having dissolved into simple swirls of horizontal and vertical lines etched over an empty gray space. The shapes of nature have died, transmuted into the elemental forms of art: "a fact has flowered into a truth" (as Thoreau would put it).

By 1914, all semblance of the external world has disappeared, even from such titles as "Composition Number 6" in which only straight rectangular blocks of black lines remain over an empty gray background. In "Composition Number 10" empty space prevails, and the rectangles are themselves unhinged to form a lattice of crossed black lines. From these radically reduced means, Mondrian

proceeded to rebuild the imagery of painting in a series of Modernist masterworks. With "Composition in Blue" of 1917, color returns to his work in the form of red and black rectangles patched on plain white background devoid of spatial illusion, and by the 1920's Mondrian is producing his signature pieces: carefully composed intervals of rectangular black lines, variously enclosing white space and solid color fields in a musically balanced order, the structured rhythms of which "come to the eye directly like the harmony of a Greek temple" (Shapiro 234). Natural imagery has been completely transmuted by an artistic recombination of those basic elements of painting revealed by the alchemical deformation of matter.

Apart from the Theosophic iconography of his "Evolution" triptych of 1911, Mondrian's development did not pass directly through a mythic phase, using imagery associated with a particular mythological tradition. His work was nevertheless mythopoetic. It achieved what all myths achieve: a regressive descent to the original levels of human consciousness, followed by a triumphant creation of a new reality. As in Persephone's dissolution into the *eidola* of Hades, Mondrian progressed from "lyrical renderings of nature" to "a conception of his art as, in essence, a constructive operation with elementary, non-mimetic forms" (Shapiro 247). That is, of course, the basic pattern of development of all the great Modernist painters, particularly the Cubists whose compositions catalyzed Mondrian's transformation, an "astonishing conversion for an accomplished painter of nature at the age of forty" (Shapiro 247).

Picasso also began with a more or less objective rendering of the external world, which evolved before the War into that fascination with the "underlying geometry" or "hidden structure" of the world Bronowski suggests the painters shared with the nuclear physicists of the early century. His painting is as saturated with mythological imagery as the work of Eliot, Pound, Joyce, or Mann, much of it concerned with abduction and death (usually by horned minotaurs). Joan Miro, the wonderful Basque artist, also began with lyrical paintings of the natural world, like "The Farm" of 1921-22, passed through the inferno of the Second World War with primitive, expressionistic paintings like "Head of a Man" of 1937, and ended his career with the playful surrealistic figures in "Personage and Bird" of 1963, which has the mythopoetic power of prehistoric art. In addition, the Surrealist painters explored an eerie underworld of their own devising, drawing on the earlier traditions of occultism, psychoanalysis, and symbolism in precursors like Odilon Redon, whose "The dream is consummated in death" from the plates to *Le Jure* of 1887 anticipates the preoccupation with the dream and the underworld in Modernism as a whole.

Paul Klee also began with delightful renditions of the Ticino mountain and lakescapes of Southern Switzerland, the same terrain Hermann Hesse devoted forty years to and portrayed in several fine watercolors. During the years of the Great War, Klee went beyond his native skills of representation to create his famous "fairy-tale" like works, which utilized a pictorial language

of "ideographs of all kinds, such as hieroglyphics, hex signs, and the mysterious markings in prehistoric caves" (Janson 528). The emphasis in works like "Battle Scene from the Comic Opera 'The Seafarer'" of 1923 is on conceptualization through playful images with mythological and folkloric overtones of meaning. In this scene, a fairy tale Sinbad fights three monstrous fish during a night-sea journey (a favorite 'type' of the journey into hell in the Bible), and one can just make out the image of a broad crucifix in the patterned color squares of the background: one of the leviathan like fish is speared exactly in the center of the horizontal and vertical beams of the cross, suggesting the same symbolism linking whale and Christ used in the poem "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" by Robert Lowell. Other works like "The Gates of Hades" of 1921 directly treat mythological themes, but reduce them to the elementary forms of circle, arch, square, and line which are "unveiled" by the curtain frame on the right.

One final painter who incorporated the mythic themes and patterns of the descent to the underworld into his abstract works was the Russian artist Marc Chagall. One particular sequence shows the cycle of the descent quite clearly. It begins with "The Dead Man" of 1908, a painting done in a kind of "naive" mode showing a grieving woman as large as the fairy tale cabins that line the street. The dead man, perhaps her husband, is laid out in the lower left, feet upraised towards us, with six candles surrounding his body. A fiddler plays on the roof above and to his left, while a man sweeps the street diagonally behind him. The theme and provincial setting are the same as those in Joyce's nearly contemporary story "The Dead," and the sense of impending doom very much catches the tone of the first phase of the Modernist breakdown described by Ricardo Quinones.

"The Funeral" of 1909 is logically the next scene in the sequence, and it shows a white-faced corpse being carted off to Hades in a carriage drawn by a red horse. The procession of the dead moves in an even horizontal line across the foreground, with three grieving women and a little dog behind the carriage, and a man pulling the horse in the front. In the snowy landscape of the background, a darkened and diminutive village huddles against the peak and undulation of a mountain, while in the midground at right a man dressed in red climbs a ladder leaning against a pole to light a candle, perhaps in a graveyard. One thinks of the solemn journey to the cemetery in the "Hades" chapter of *Ulysses*, here reduced to a charming but ominous fairy-tale landscape, utilizing the candle symbolism of the Jewish as opposed to the Catholic faith.

How interesting then that the next painting in the sequence should represent a mystical marriage in full color and cubist space. "The Wedding" of 1910 shows the same horizontal progression of figures moving from the left to the right as in "The Funeral" and is again set in a little rural Russian village sporting a fiddler leading the married couple to the right. On the far left a

man balances two jugs of water or wine from a beam held on his shoulders and neck, looking like the scales used for Judgement in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. The bride is dressed in white, and the groom in black, and we are reminded that marriage was seen as an abduction of the bride by Hades in Greece, and celebrated as such in the marriage of Joseph and Asenath in Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers*. Apparently Chagall's sequence here imagines death as a separation of the soul from its life attachments (the abduction of Persephone) and its subsequent mystical marriage to the Lord in the underworld.

Think also of the symbolism of C.G. Jung's near death experience of 1944, when he broke his foot and had a heart attack. Part of the series of visions he had while lying in the hospital bed at night incorporated the traditions of Jewish mysticism: Jung saw his nurse as an "old Jewish woman" with a "blue halo around her head" and he imagined himself at the wedding of Tifereth and Malchuth in the Pardes Rimmonim, and as "Rabbi Simon ben Jochai, whose wedding in the afterlife was being celebrated. It was the mystic marriage as it appears in the Cabbalistic tradition" (294). Jung's earlier crisis of 1914 had also involved what he saw as his personal *nekyia*, and led to the revelation of the elemental forms of the mythic imagination employed in Chagall's paintings of the same period. In fact, Jung expressed the essence of the insights gained by his descent into the unconscious in mandala forms very similar to Kandinsky's circular microcosmoi.

One final painting of 1927 shows the continuity the iconography of the underworld in Chagall's work. In "The Dream" we see a woman borne along by a kind of rabbit-goat on whose back she lies with breasts bared toward the inverted landscape above. The thin strip of the natural world has been turned upside down by the dream, and the woman is unconscious or perhaps dead, with her arms dangling down and tied under the animal's belly, and her legs lifeless beneath its neck. This occurs in a midnight blue space lit by the pale empty circle of a moon. The scene shows an abduction, a favorite motif in Chagall's work (as in "Equestrienne" of 1931) which echoes Kandinsky's early "Couple on Horseback." Its imagery approximates the Egyptian motif of Osiris in the form of the bull transporting the prone mummy to the underworld (Lauf 279; Campbell, *The Hero* 54), a scene sometimes depicted as a sarcophagus lying on a lion's back (Clark 129). The hare in Chagall's painting also has chthonic associations with Hecate, the lunar goddess of Hades, whose German equivalent was called Harek (Cirlot 139).

All aspects of the Modernist revolution, then, are enriched by what Plato called "the benefactory intelligence of Hades the archetypal intelligence given in images" (Hillman, *Dream* 121). The "rape of the natural" leads to the revelation of the *eidola*, those elementary ideas which shape life, art, literature, psychology, science--and death.

7.3 Thanatology

Carol Zaleski has recently discussed the relationships between the Medieval narrative accounts of journeys to the otherworld and the modern experience of death and dying in the near-death literature of Raymond Moody, Kenneth Ring, Russell Noyes, and others. The Medieval accounts include a variety of literary and religious sources (the Vision of St. Paul, the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, the Vision of Drythelm, St. Patrick's Purgatory, and Dante's *Divine Comedy* among them). The dream-vision of the otherworld was of course a popular genre during the Middle Ages, and its roots in Celtic, Christian, and Classical iconographies has been rather thoroughly explored by other literary critics as well.² Apart from the categorical inventory of torments associated with the inferno, standard images of the underworld include magical castles, misty lake and river crossings, trials and ordeals, mysterious and omniscient guides, paradisaic landscapes, and enchanted cities.

The modern accounts focus on the visionary experiences of people who have come close to death or have actually clinically died and been revived. A typical narrative, drawn from an increasingly large number of cases studied, would include a sense of being rapidly propelled down a long dark tunnel, seeing one's body from a distance with painless detachment, being received by ancestors already dead, and a meeting guide or 'being of light' who asks the person to review their past life in minute and vivid detail, and who communicates an overwhelming sense of peace, joy, and absolute knowledge. Often included in the accounts are splendidly beautiful landscapes and transcendental music. A threshold is then approached when it is decided that the individual must return to life. When he or she later tries to tell others, difficulties arise, but generally the individual discovers a new attitude towards life and a decline in the fear of death (Grof 12-13).

Stanislav Grof, like Carol Zaleski and others, has noted the close relationship between such near-death-experience accounts and the traditional imageries of the journey to the underworld recorded in religious eschatologies like the Tibetan and Egyptian Books of the Dead, in the Medieval *Ars Moriendi* or *The Art of Dying*, in ritual encounters with death in shamanic initiations and other rites of passage studied by anthropologists like Van Gennep, and in a variety of world mythologies. Recent studies in the imagery of death and rebirth in schizophrenia and psychedelic states has led to the conclusion that Modern science has a great deal to learn from these ancient systems of thought. Grof suggests therefore, that "these mythologies and concepts of God, heaven and hell are an intrinsic part of the human personality" which are activated during periods of severe crisis, both during life and at the point of death (*Beyond Death* 31).

Many of the fundamental themes of both the near-death-experience and the mythological, religious, anthropological, and literary accounts of the journey

to the otherworld discussed by Grof and Zaleski are already familiar to us from the detailed analyses of Modernist literature and art in the chapters above: the journey, the ordeal of hell and creatures of darkness, the universal judgement, encounters with beings of light, paradise, and transcendence (*Beyond Death* 65-95). Zaleski, in fact, argues that there is a "fundamental kinship between otherworld visions and the more common forms of imaginative experience" (205); like literature, the near-death narratives are "imaginative forms rather than descriptive models. They provide coherent patterns for dramatizing inner experience" (192).

These "coherent patterns" she sees as "artifacts of the imagination" (192) similar to Jung's archetypes or Hillman's *eidola* in the kingdom of Hades. She argues that we need to make our way between the Seylla of positivist reductionism and the Charybdis of mystical proof when approaching the near-death-experience: "near death visions are works of the religious imagination, whose function is to communicate meaning through symbolic forms rather than to copy external facts" (187). These "symbolic forms" work with "universal patterns" and "culturally specific and idiosyncratic material" in order to fuse "the universal and the particular into a seamless narrative whole" (191). This is a view very similar to Joseph Campbell's understanding of the mythic imagination as clothing the "elementary ideas" of the mind in the local forms and customs of a particular place and time, which he calls the "folk idea" (*Inner Reaches* 11).

Zaleski further argues that the "symbols" of the "religious imagination" convey an understanding of the "transcendent" which eludes rational analysis, but which is essential to our health. That is to say, the symbolic imageries of the near-death narrative and the literary journey to the underworld help make us what Karlfried Graf von Durkheim called "transparent to the transcendent" (qtd. Campbell, "Myths and Mysteries"). They prepare us both for death, and for life, and need occasionally themselves to be re-visioned. As Zaleski suggests, while the symbols of either the religious or the literary imagination cannot be declared true or false, they can be either vital or weak. Theology, literature, science, and art play a therapeutic role by noticing when "an archetype degenerates into a stereotype" and by responding with the creation or re-creation of a symbolic language appropriate to the needs of the time (193).

Of great value to our understanding of the sudden surge of interest in the descent to the underworld in Modernism is Zaleski's conclusion that "otherworld journey narration is likely to become prominent at times when a culture develops, or encounters through contact with other cultures, new perspectives on the social and natural universe which--until assimilated by the religious imagination--give rise to 'cognitive dissonance' and spiritual dislocation" (203). The Medieval period was such a time, as was the Modernist: both experienced the "anarchy and futility" of "cognitive dissonance" and both witnessed an extraordinary influx of information about other cultures. Though

Zaleski argues that it is "unlikely that a Gregory the Great or a Dante will emerge to shape near-death testimony into religiously sophisticated or artistically ordered statement" (204). I would argue that such figures have already emerged. *The Death of Virgil*, *Finnegans Wake*, and the other Modernist literary, scientific, and artistic endeavors discussed above constitute what Bronowski called the "great collective work of art of the twentieth century" (330), and its impact has been to relieve "cognitive dissonance" and "spiritual dislocation" by, in part, regaining "a religious sense of the cosmos" (Zaleski 203) through a creative descent to the underworld.

If anything incontrovertible can be said about the reports about visions of life after death by patients declared clinically dead, it is that dying opens the portals of the imagination. Even more so than dreams, the *nekyia* is a via regia to the unconscious. The deep structures of psyche are activated by the process of death, whether that death be metaphorical (as in psychosis, LSD therapy, shamanism, reverie, sleep, dreams, or indeed in literature) or a literal expiration of the patient upon the operating table. What is revealed through the descent to the underworld is the pattern that shapes lives into significant destinies. After all, both Odysseus and Aeneas had learned the secrets of their future by going down amongst the Kimmerian shades. Along with the revelation of their personal fates came the revelation of the basic myths of the tribe, those stories and images that ordered entire civilizations into patterns of meaning. These are the supreme fictions we need to live, write, and read by: the descent constellates the archetypal forms of the mind which are the basis of all creation.

Notes

¹ Andreas Lommel argues that the shamanic *nekyia* was "responsible for the beginnings of artistic representation" (qtd. in Zaleski 211n.)

² D.D.R. Owen concentrates his attention on the Christian themes of the descent into hell in Medieval French romances, rooting many of the motifs in the legendary Harrowing of Hell after the Crucifixion recorded in the Gospel of Nicodemus. Howard Rollin Patch provides a very comprehensive overview of the Oriental, Classical, Celtic, and Germanic mythologies which saturate the world of Medieval literature. Ronnie Terpening focuses on Charon and the crossing to the otherworld in Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance works. These are a few of the many to be found in Zaleski's bibliography and chronology of the journeys in Medieval literature. I know of no treatment of the theme that provides adequate coverage of the Modern period. Raymond Clark mentions adding a postscript to his study of Vergil that would sketch "the apocalyptic use of the theme in modern descent literature from Dante onwards" (4), but

can only cite the very incomplete short study by H.W. Stubbs as an early effort.

Conclusion

An Archetypal Poetics of Modernism

1. *Nekyia* as *Poesis*

James Hillman has described the mythogenetic sphere of the underworld as "a storehouse of the imaginal" (*Myth* 210), which he calls, following Augustine, the *thesaurus inscrutabilis* of *memoria*. *Memoria* refers here to a Platonic recollection of those ideas (*eidola*) which constitute what Yeats called the "ghostly paradigm of things". It is "a storehouse of qualities and a movement of changing images that are the formal causes of experience, giving it shape, color, change, and significance" (*Myth* 176). This formulation follows the Neoplatonic tradition, in which *memoria* was a "vestige or trace in the soul of the godhead ... or reflection of the divine images and ideas" (*Myth* 172). These vestiges of divinity are encoded as those "mythical figures ... which provide the a priori structures within the caverns and dens of the immeasurable imagination" (*Myth* 179). However, since "the palaces and caverns of *memoria* are also arenas of the inferno" (*Myth* 191), access to psyche's granary is predicated upon breakdown and descent: Persephone must be abducted to the underworld before the riches of the storehouse can be revealed.¹

Joseph Campbell's hero journey cycle also describes this process whereby the mythic patterns of experience are revealed through breakdown and descent. For Campbell, the crossing of the threshold into the underworld of archetypal powers coincides with events like abduction, dismemberment, crucifixion, or battle with a "shadow presence that guards the passage" from the commonday world into the unknown (*Hero*: 245-246). Hillman suggests that the function of such "pathologized" imageries in dreams, as in myths and literature, is to initiate a "sudden shift in perspective from life to death, from physical reality to psychic reality, from nature to imagination" (*Re-Visioning* 86). In the monomyth, it is inevitably the shipwrecks that sever the umbilical connections of the hero to normal life that make this transition possible, and in the literature of Modernism it is precisely the eruptions of pathology and death in the shifting moods of daily life which serve to open the text to "the underworld of psychic being" (Hillman, *Re-Visioning* 109).

Perhaps most emblematic of the centrality of death as a key operation of the "deformative activity of the imagination" (Bachelard, qtd. in Hillman, *Dream*: 128), is the death of Finnegan in *Finnegans Wake*, or of Virgil in Hermann Broch's work.² Here the linkage of death, dream, and the underworld of the mythic imagination is most explicit, in as much as the revelation of its elemental forms depends upon the death of the protagonists. With these works it is literally "the bizarre, peculiar, sick, or wounded figure--the disruptive element--to which we must look for the key to the dream-work" of the artist (Hillman, *Dream* 128). One should also remember, however, the importance of the deaths of parents in such works as *Sons and Lovers*, *Ulysses*, *The Magic Mountain*, and *To the Lighthouse* which initiate the hero journeys of the protagonists and the vocations of the authors. The descent to the underworld leads in each case to the activation of the mythogenetic substratum of *memoria*. This gives us a new way of understanding why personal and historical crisis coincide with works alluding to the underworld in Modernist literature. From this perspective, the crisis can be seen not only as a reflection of the malaise and sense of cultural loss pervading the period, but also as revealing the bare bones of the actual process of poetic creation visible in the works themselves: the *nekyia* is an image of *poesis*, and the underworld a topos, or "place of invention."³

This would suggest, for example, that Kurtz's death in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* can be deliteralized: it is not only a symbol of the collapse of the will sustaining the historical inertia of imperialism, but also a manifestation of the necessary collapse of the writer's ego (or at least that part of it allied with the empire building of the Nineteenth Century) in his effort to engage the depths of the imaginal psyche in his writing, i.e., to bring soul into the text. Similarly, Aschenbach's death in Mann's *Death in Venice* symbolizes the liberation of that aspect of the writer's ego or persona (a willful, tightfisted commitment to the social duties of the 19th Century artist) impeding the free expression of imaginal depths.

In Lawrence's novels the father represents these commitments to the concerns of normal life. For example, in *The Rainbow* the fathers represent the security of family and farm (Tom Brangwen), the interest in traditional religious beliefs and a parochial concern for village life (Will Brangwen), and the social and military duties of the male as upholder of the mechanisms of nationality (Skrebensky). All of these Lawrence must reject to assert his vocation as an artist, just as Joyce's Dedalus, as a "priest of eternal imagination," must fly above the nets of family, religion, and nation. The destruction of the males in the novel sustains Lawrence's commitment to the muses of the underworld, where the mothers live. He becomes a mouthpiece of the soul, and a devotee of death as the "mother of beauty" through a process of alchemical breakdown that frees the imagination. As Edinger notes, the "dead king or father figure" signifies the "death of the ruling principle of consciousness, the highest authority in the hierarchical structure of the ego ...

After a descent into hell, the ego (king) is reborn, phoenixlike, in a purified state" (19). The alchemical decomposition of the male figures in the novel, therefore, is really what makes Lawrence's career possible: the death of the fathers images the process whereby life attachments are severed so that they may be reborn in the text as figures of the imagination.

The alchemical operations, which break base matter down to its elemental constituents, involve the same deconstructive processes of dissolution, calcination, and mortification as those found in the descent to the underworld. The imageries of alchemy and the *nekyia* which saturate Modernist texts reflect the process whereby "the daily bread of experience is transmuted into the radiant everliving body of art" (Joyce, *A Portrait* 221). What falls apart in the literature, what is crippled, paralyzed (Joyce), suicidal (Woolf), murdered, raped, choleric, tubercular, syphilitic (Mann), mad and raving (Conrad), or drunk (Lowry) is that component of the writer's personality (commonly called the ego) which impedes creativity. One can revision the processes of creative dissolution in Modernist literature as a breaking down of those personal, social, cultural, and aesthetic obstructions which obscure the primary Imagination. When the imagination is thus engaged in transmuting its materials, certain archetypal constellations inevitably emerge.

Rollo May calls these deep structures of the imagination "ground forms, the basic structure of reality, below the strewn surface of the arena where bitch goddesses cavort" (97). He quotes Picasso to the effect that "every aspect of creation is first of all an act of destruction" (63), and he argues that what we see broken down is the conscious mind, with all its assumptions and beliefs, which "the unconscious seems to take delight in breaking through and breaking up" (62). His description of this process as a "battle" and a "dynamic struggle" during which "some insight, some new perspective ... is struggling to be born" out of some "depth below the level of awareness" (63) fits Hillman's understanding of the Persephone myth as a metaphor representing the creative process. In both there is a sense of struggle between upper and lower worlds, between conscious and unconscious, in which a breakdown leads to creativity.

Coleridge, like Hillman, has also conceived of the workings of imagination as producing symbols through a process of "creative dissolution": the secondary imagination, according to Coleridge a reflection of the creative power of God, "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" (516). What it destroys is the stuff of daily life, which must suffer the "death dealing blow" of the imagination in order to be transmuted into poetry: "Imagination works by deforming and forming at one and the same moment," Hillman writes, "as if the formal cause at work in the imagination is the principle of deformation, or 'pathologizing' the image" (*Dream* 128). The Russian formalists call this "defamiliarization", a process whereby the elemental patterns of the poetic imagination are revealed as the story is shaped into a plot (Steiner 50-54). These story materials taken out of life and into soul are analogous to the

Tagesreste in Freud's dream theory, those remnants of daily life broken down into elemental symbols and transformed by the dreamwork's alchemical operations (Severson 98-117).

Jung writes that the alchemical opus is "an analogy of the natural process by means of which instinctive energy is transformed, at least in part, into symbolical activity" (*Transference* 88), and the same can be said of the *nekyia*. Hillman suggests that "Jung superbly summed up the primary message imparted by the guidebooks (Egyptian and Tibetan) to the land of the dead, saying that they teach us 'the primacy of the psyche'" (*Dream* 47). Similarly, the "underworld images" we encounter in Modernism "are ontological statements about the soul, how it exists in and for itself beyond life" (*Dream* 47). The severing of life attachments and the destabilization of the ego in the lives of the writers creates wounds through which the universal qualities of the collective psyche enter the text: Hades is the "God who takes things out of nature and into psyche through deformation" (Hillman, *Dream* 129).

Perhaps this is why Wallace Stevens says that "death is the mother of beauty" in his "Sunday Morning," a poem which also begins with a descent to the underworld, as the dreaming protagonist of the first stanza imagines "some procession of the dead" crossing "Over the seas, to silent Palestine / Dominion of the blood and sepulchre". For it is death that, in Marvell's phrase, "annihilates all that's made / To a green thought in a green shade", i.e., to *eidos*, *entelechy*, or archetype, a primogenitive element of the imagination. Once the phenomenal structures of the world have dissolved (once Persephone has been abducted) the radiance of their roots in the Imagination shines forth. As Anthony Libby points out, "figural or literal death is the ground of revelation" (1). Through death and collapse the autonomous archetypes of the underworld bleed into manifestation. What rises from the ashes of apocalypse (a word meaning both revelation and doom) is a phoenix, or a "golden bird to set upon a bough and sing" (Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium"). That is to say, the death or collapse of the ego (in the texts and in life) leads to the revelation of the mythical images which are the basic elements of the psyche. And this basic structure becomes the "mother of beauty," that womb (the *prima materia*) from which new forms emerge, the great "Image which yet fresh images begets."

Like Orpheus in Broch's *The Death of Virgil*, the Modernists go down to recover a new speech that will adequately express these mythogenetic depths of the soul. In this sense, they are like the shamans of the Paleolithic and contemporary hunting peoples. These were the spirit priests and healers who passed through the *nerika*, "a doorway within our minds that usually remains hidden and secret until the time of death" (Paul Adams, qtd. in Halifax: 1), on a journey to the otherworld. This doorway can be opened in life by "a severe physical illness or psychological crisis" during which the shaman initiate descends "into the underworld of suffering and death", and becomes (like

Hermes) an "intermediary between the realms of the divine, the nether world, and the middle world" (Halifax 12, 19, 37). He or she then returns to heal others and guide souls into death through the singing of songs retrieved from his own descent. In these songs, "the voices of gods and ancestors or the shadowy spirits of the dead" can often be heard (Halifax 34). Listening to them makes sense out of human life (gives it shape and significance) through reference to "a system of philosophical, psychological, spiritual, and sociological symbols" (Halifax 34).

The Modernist writers share all this with the shaman: they too have passed through the *nerika* and returned with healing songs that have mesmerized readers. Their works are steeped in the same rich loam of archetypal imagery that is found in shaman song: pristine deserts, mountain solitudes, ordeals of decay and dismemberment, sacred trees and magical substances (like the crystal-seed of dreams in *The Death of Virgil*), mythological birds and spirit flight, and androgynous beings who unite "the Dionysian and the Apollonian" (Halifax 3-34). And they too underwent the "imperial affliction" of a vocation which forced them to sever all ties with their past (Halifax 13), as a prerequisite to initiatory transformation. The shaman songs they return with are analogous to the Egyptian and Tibetan Books of the Dead, which record the revelation of the secrets of the psyche in a special language of the soul (what the shaman called the language of the birds). As such, the Modernist performs the "functions of magician and naturalist, poet and philosopher, preacher, healer, and public counselor" E.R. Dodds (146) attributes to the shaman.⁴

The writer performs these functions by healing the split between soul and world, re-minding the reader of the archetypal depths of the underworld. In so doing, he executes what Thomas Mann calls his "mediating task, his hermetic and magical role as broker between the upper and lower world" (*Essays* 376). S/he wakens forgotten depths so that we are not forced to concretize the *nekyia* by literally enacting apocalypse in daily life. For this seems to be the central problem we face today: annihilation on a global scale. After Jihad, or Armageddon, Jesus promises, "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed," when the seven seals of the Book of the Dead are scared open by the radiance of Christ. This yearning for the end which reveals the ultimate meaning of things, the latent death wish of the species, is finally a yearning for the "benefactory intelligence of Hades" which keeps all souls imprisoned in the underworld (Plato, qtd. in Hillman, *Dream*: 121). Is there no way for the descent of the spirit into our world other than the literal enactment of Apocalypse history has been rehearsing throughout our century? The Modernist writers would seem to suggest that there is, an imaginal way, which returns phenomena to a noumenal source through the sacrificial rituals of imagination--writing and reading.⁵

2. Hades and Hermeneutics

As we have seen, in his *Prelude to the Joseph Novels*, Thomas Mann proposed the Gnostic myth of the descent of the spirit into the underworld of matter as the myth writers live by: the *nekyia* becomes an image of *poesis*. In a sense, it is also the myth readers live by, in as much as we all enact Oedipa Maas's fantasy at the end of *The Crying of Lot 49*, standing in "a patch of sun" waiting for the "descending angel" to clear up the hieroglyphic mysteries of the Book of the Dead (127). The meaning of the book lies buried in the text, and to recover it we must go into the underworld to find it. Perhaps we return only with an image of its truth, a fleeting glimpse of its soul before it fades Eurydice like back into the kingdom of images which lured us there in the first place. To read is to remove ourselves from the concerns of daily life, to retreat to a place of our own, or even to delve into a book on the morning bus to work, so that we may revive a sense of soul in our surroundings.

Randolph Severson suggests that "the written text is like the unconscious in that it also has a deep, cold well of refreshing images that quench the burning psychological thirst of the reader" (93), and that "every interpretation of a text ... is guided by an ocean-deep image, a shimmering symbol, an archetype" (94). He chooses the myth of Eros and Psyche as the myth of reading: "the drama enacted between reader and text can be described psychologically as the encounter between the fiery Eros of the reader's imagination and Psyche, who is hidden or sometimes totally lost in the darkness of the text" (93). Eros in this context is a "physical yearning for the invisibilities: images, *eidolon*, which lie sleeping in the crypt of the text" (96), language which evokes a sense of Psyche in the underworld into which the reader is drawn. While Severson acknowledges that "any god may preside over the space, *temenos*, of reading" (97), I would argue that Hades holds the keys: reading is literally a communion with the dead writers of the past, and every interpretation a plundering of the "crypt of the text."

Yet the psychic riches of Hades are present not only in the text, nor only in the imagination of the reader. They are indeed both there and beyond both places: "reading occurs within the space of the archetypes, takes place within the House of the Gods" (Severson 94). Just as Lawrence had argued that each text has a god encoded within it, so each reading must as well. Since "the archetypes are the *a priori* conditions of the experience of meaning ... the gods are present in everything one does, even in reading" (Severson 94-95). Reading and interpretation, therefore, occur in a special place between reader and text, shared by both, which we might call a *temenos*, a sanctuary of the gods where issues of the soul are tended to. It is both by means of the archetypes in the underworld of the reader's psyche, and the allusions in the crypt of the text, in turn projected there by the writer's psychic fields, that we are able to make meanings.

Walter Michaels has also argued that "the self is already an interpretation as well as an interpreter ... it is not radically free ... to impose its own meanings on any text" (Tompkins xxiv).⁶ The self is already defined by a set of ideas before it even begins to think. But where critics like Michaels and Fish see this as the result of value systems and procedures of reading inherent to the cultural context of the self, encoded both in the conventions of the text and the preconditioned structures of reading, Hillman would argue that we must go beyond to the innate ideas at the roots of such conventions: the "archetypal fantasy in each of our ideas" replaces the culturally conditioned system of values as the subject of critical scrutiny. These fundamental ideas are in some sense preformulated as the basis of all interpretation: "We see them and by means of them," Hillman suggests (*Re-Visioning* 121).

This image of the self as a constellation of archetypal patterns at the root of individual readings brings Hillman close to Norman Holland's notion of the role of the identity theme in interpretation and reader response. However, Hillman would object strongly to the monocentricism of that term, since it is a collection of archetypal fantasies in continually shifting patterns that constitutes a response during any single reading session. This insight lays the foundations of an archetypal model of reading appropriate to the observations of Walker Gibson and Gerald Prince, who argue that we can be many different kinds of 'narratee' (Tompkins 1-25). Hades is also the appropriate aegis for this multiplicity of response, since, as we know from the journey of Odysseus, the underworld is the reservoir of *all* the myths which animate the individual and culture.

Once into the House of Hades, where writing and interpretation proceed, it is particularly important not to reduce the status of the psychic images presiding there by personalizing them or by performing what Jonathan Culler calls "an unseemly rush from word to world" (117). Culler insists that "literature is something other than a statement about the world" (117); Hillman would agree, but would add that "underworld images" in literature tell us something about the "soul, how it exists in and of itself beyond life" (*Dream* 47). Any interpretation that seeks to escape Hades by reducing an image to an idea, or by forcing the text or the reader into an upperworld system of considerations, is therefore as inadequate as any procedure which neglects close scrutiny of the text.

An archetypal poetics must begin with a precise examination of the actual sequence, feeling, images, and details of the text, before moving carefully into its essential depths and archetypal premise. Any single reading moves through a series of stages analogous to the *nekyia*. After an initial resistance to the text, we remove ourselves from daily life and enter its seductive world. Then there occur moments of "reflection ... initiated by the soul which intervenes and countervails what we are in the midst of doing, hearing, reading, watching" (*Re-Visioning* 140). This intuitive reverie leads then to what Georges

Poulet called a "process of interiorizing" (Tompkins 41-49) in which awareness shifts "from the surface of visibilities to the less visible" (*Re-Visioning* 140). Hillman calls it "subjectivizing" (140), a process analogous to Poulet's paradoxical notion of the reader as both contained by and containing the objective consciousness of the text.

The next stage of a 'psychologized' descent into the underworld shared by text, writer, and reader involves shaping the details of the reverie induced by reading into a narrative that accounts for the event. Hillman calls this "mythologizing" and argues that "all explanations whatsoever may be regarded as narrative fantasies and examined as myths" (*Re-Visioning* 141). All logical explanations, all critical theories then, are fictions whose origins are in the fantasy activity of the imaginal psyche. The ideas composed and organized into narratives by these explanations must also, therefore, be seen through to their roots in the archetypes of Hades. If we ignore the imaginal background to all thinking, the tools use their maker. A critical dogmatism then emerges from a reading, and "the fresh perception that is required for each image" is lost: we "neglect the image for the idea" (*Re-Visioning* 144). That is to say, reading becomes stereotypical -- Bloomian, Jungian, Structuralist, Deconstructive -- and literature is dissolved into theories about literature, it loses its soul.

Since the psyche is inherently polycentric, and since the granary of Hades contains many seed forms that could grow into a mythic writing or reading, we cannot adopt any *single* critical position: we have to acknowledge them all, hopefully not always with blood sacrifice. As Matthew Arnold has put it, criticism should show its disinterestedness by "resolutely following the laws of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches; by resolutely refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior considerations about ideas ... which criticism has really nothing to do with" (qtd. Holland 153). As Hillman puts it, the soul of reading and interpretation must exercise its "fantasy in freedom from logical, sentimental, or moral restrictions, extending its comprehension by seeing through the coagulations of every sort of fixated form" (*Re-Visioning* 154).

Thus, if there is any single mythic personage at the root of an archetypal hermeneutics of reading, it would be Hermes, the Greek god whom Thomas Mann chose as the archetypal patron of the literary arts. He is a psychopomp, guide of souls to the underworld in Homer's *Odyssey*, and he is also the patron of interpretation (hermeneutics) and of thieves in the marketplace: as Robertson Davies puts it, "All artists are children of Hermes, the Arch-Crook" (237), and the same might well be said of critics. As divine messenger, Hermes translates archetypal imagery into a soul-language accessible to human ears, and as psychopomp he presides over our descent into the crypt of the text, from which we return to the world laden with the riches of the Wealth-Giver. He is the wandering deity and the mediator between natural fact and spirited fiction, between worlds, and between disciplines. Hermes is the thief who

"appropriates from theology, from science, from literature, from medicine, parasitical and penetrating everywhere, playing the thieving renegade among the faculties" (Hillman, *Re-Visioning* 162). That is to say, he sponsors a "free play of the mind on all subjects," taking us to Hades, the "God of the hidden, the underworld meaning in things" (Hillman, *Re-Visioning* 205).

To which Charon, then, do we offer coin for the passage: to Hermes, or to Ares, god of war, patron of Armageddon? As T.H. White has King Arthur suggest before the last apocalyptic battle with Mordred in *The Once and Future King*, our only hope of establishing a new Round Table on a new earth "without boundaries between nations" is in "culture. If people could be persuaded to read and write ... there was still a chance that they might come to reason" (639).

3. The Myth of Modernism

As noted above, the development of Modernism in the arts and sciences illustrates that transition from the naturalistic perspective to a psychic underworld of myth and metaphor Hillman associates with the abduction of Persephone. It is Hades who presides over this transformation of the novel from the naturalistic autobiographies of the initial phase of Modernism, to the mythic method of works like *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, *The Magic Mountain*, *The Death of Virgil*, and *The Plumed Serpent* (to name a few). The breakdown and de-stabilization of early characters like Prufrock, Kurtz, Gerald Crich, the Buddenbrooks family, or Gabriel Conroy, led to the breakthroughs of Virgil, Joseph, Hans Castorp, and others into a mythic substratum of identity that sustained and enriched the writing of their creators.

It is important to remember that, in the myth, it is a rape that initiates the revelation of the psychic depths of Hades. The descent begins with a pathological act of criminal violation and wounding. Since Hades is the "God who takes things out of nature and into psyche through deformation," it is therefore to the "pathologized image in the dream, the bizarre, peculiar, sick, or wounded figure" (Hillman, *Dream* 128-129) that we must look for the key to the development of Modernism. And of course Modernism is as full of such figures initially as it is replete with allusions to the underworld: Prufrock's "patient etherized upon a table", the paralytics of Joyce's *Dubliners*, Christian Buddenbrooks' syphilis and Hans Castorp's touch of tuberculosis (shared in actuality by Proust and Lawrence), and many others. Even the language of the deformed word in *Finnegans Wake* occurs in this context linking the dream and the underworld as repositories of psychic myths and images revealed by collapse and decay. As we have seen, a similar deformation of nature occurs in Modernist painting.

Along with this deformation, of course, is a complete change of perspective signified by the transformation of Persephone from struggling rape victim to

bride of Hades. This involves a transition from "the heroic basis of consciousness to the poetic basis of consciousness" (Hillman, *Dream* 137) illustrated in Modernism by the shift from the naturalistic plot novel to the epiphanic structures linking moments in time by the invisible connections of metaphor and myth. Both novel and poem undergo this transition at the time of the discovery of the underworld of the mind by Jung and Freud, and of the material universe by Einstein, Rutherford, and Bohr. Underlying these radical shifts of perspective is precisely the passage from the material surface of linear relations to the underworld of intangible metaphor imaged in the rape of Persephone.

Hillman calls this revelatory process of deformation "pathologizing" and notes that "within the affliction is a complex, within the complex an archetype, which in turn refers to a God" (*Re-Visioning* 104). It is therefore through the afflictions of characters like Prufrock, Kurtz, and Hans Castorp that Modernist literature comes to an awareness of myth: the gods and pathology are inextricable, in life and literature. Like Thomas Mann, Hillman⁴ argues that there is an "intimate relation between pathologizing and imagination ... each pathological theme has an archetypal perspective" (*Re-Visioning* 107-108). In a character like Adrian Leverkühn, we literally see the "Gods moving in our complexes" (Hillman, *Re-Visioning* 108), as Mephistopheles inspires and directs the entire opus of the composer by infecting him with syphilitic meningitis.

It is therefore through disintegration that we are moved from a kind of monotheism into the realm of mythic polycentricity in later Modernism. The grotesque imagery and eruptions of pathology in its early stages serve to dissolve the ego into "the underworld of psychic being" (*Re-Visioning* 109) of its mythic phase. These symptoms (of writer, character, and reader) drain energy off into the unconscious, bringing us face to face with deformity and death, thereby connecting us to soul. Wounding and disintegration in the texts initiate the transition from nature to psyche, and lead to the rediscovery of soul. The mythic images of the second phase of Modernism are then revealed by this "sudden shift in perspective from life to death, from physical reality to psychic reality, from nature to imagination" (Hillman, *Re-Visioning* 86). In Modernism, this reality of soul is not fully revealed until its authors are "attacked by Hades, until invisible forces of the unconscious underworld overpower" its protagonists (Hillman, *Re-Visioning* 208). Only Hans Castorp's illness and the death of his family take him to the Magic Mountain.

The mythic personifications of the underworld in Modernist art and literature were simultaneously being explored by Freud and Jung in their depth psychologies. Hillman reminds us that the term 'schizophrenia' was officially coined just before the First World War, at a time when pathology and fragmentation were "beginning to appear in the culture in general. Through this multiple schizoid perspective we saw a world no longer held together by reason, no longer held and centered at all" (*Re-Visioning* 25). Things fell apart,

broke down, dissolved into fragmented plurality. Cubism, atonal music, montage and the multiplicity of style and perspective in Modernism can all be seen then as the collapse of the psyche of the culture into the primordial polycentricity of Hades. In the arts as in psychology, this meant a revival of interest in myth, which "offers a model of disintegrated integration The return to Greece offers a way of coping when our centers cannot hold and things fall apart" (Hillman, *Re-Visioning* 27). Myth offered the Modernists a vision of a world that is polycentric and informed by a collection of "personified images" native to the structure of the psyche (Hillman, *Re-Visioning* 33). And of all the myths available, the Modernists unanimously chose the descent to Hades as the myth most relevant to their experience and search for meaning.

Notes

¹ For a Freudian / Bloomian view of the underworld as a "burial place of memory" see Ronald MacDonald, who argues that the "land of the dead is thus an arena where the poet can contemplate the past as past, where, to use Freud's terminology, he can remember the past without being obliged to repeat it. The underworld is in this respect analogous to the unconscious, and the journey there has something like the effect of liberating the poet from repressed material that he would otherwise have to repeat" (8).

² See John Bishop for a thorough and insightful discussion of Joyce's use of the Egyptian Books of the Dead in *Finnegans Wake* (86-125). Bishop argues that Joyce relates the Egyptian cartographics of the underworld to the human processes of sleep and dreaming (much as Hillman would).

³ David Miller notes that "The descent *ad inferos* is a descent into poetry" because the descent activates a "poetic way of seeing" the metaphoric "inferences" beneath the surface of things (214). The definition of topos as a "place of invention" comes from Harold Bloom (2), whose sense of poems as breaking form "to bring about meaning" (1) is analogous to but different from the process of deformation and poesis I outline here.

⁴ *Nierika* is a Huichol Indian word for the doorway between worlds, and it is interesting to speculate that since shamanism is thought to have originated among Paleo-Oriental civilizations, the word may be related to the Greek word for the descent to the underworld, *nekylia*. This is all the more possible in the light of E.R. Dodds' suggestion that the otherworldly aspects of Greek myth and philosophy (Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Orphism) may well reflect shamanistic influences. For another discussion of shamanistic elements in western culture, see Mircea Eliade, who suggests that "a magnificent book remains to be written on the ecstatic 'sources' of epic and lyric poetry ...

and, in general, on the fabulous worlds discovered, explored, and described by the ancient shamans" (*Shamanism* 511).

⁵ The phrase comes from Tom Moore's book *Rituals of the Imagination*.

⁶ Neither of the two fine anthologies of reader-response criticism include the archetypal perspective on reading that Severson introduces and which I expand on briefly here. Jane Tompkins traces the development of reader oriented criticism through New Criticism, structuralism, stylistics, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and post-structuralism, while Susan Suleiman distinguishes "six varieties of audience oriented criticism: rhetorical; semiotic and structuralist; phenomenological; subjective and psychoanalytic; sociological and historical; and hermeneutic" (6-7). William Doty, however, points out that John J. White discusses the role of mythic prefigurations in the reading process (186), and that "the reader ... is after all myth-making in his reading as much as the writer in his writing" (Eric Gould, qtd. 190).

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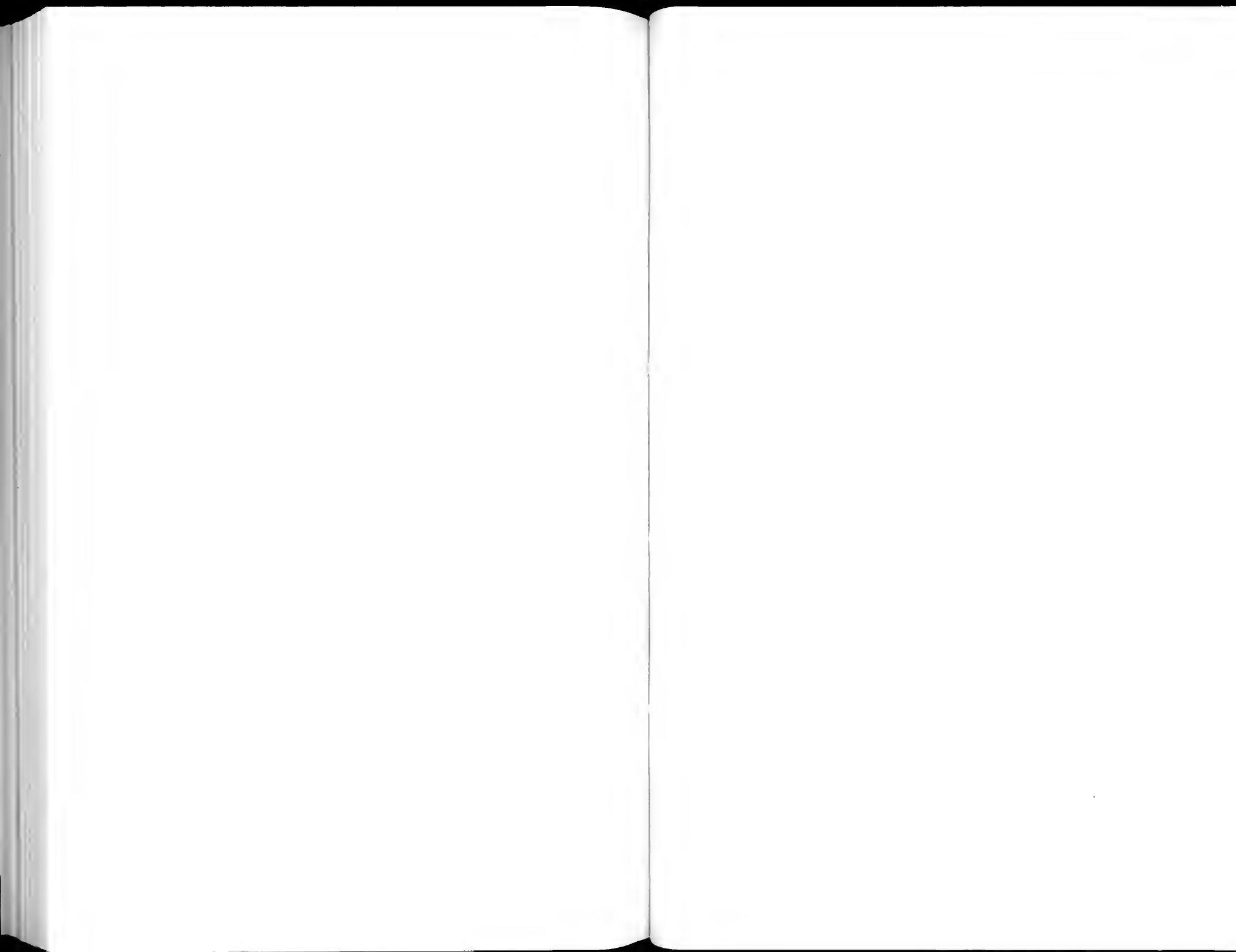
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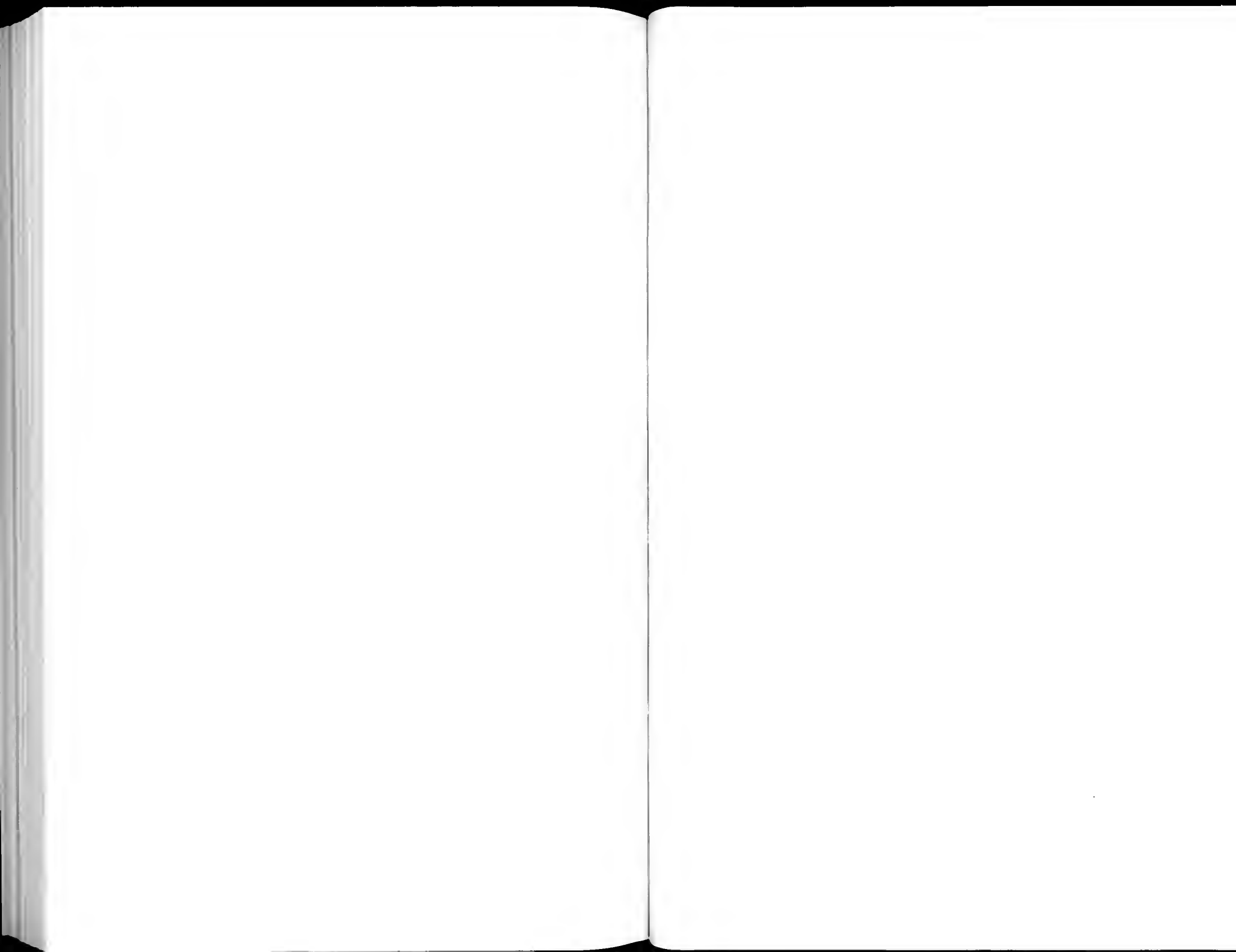
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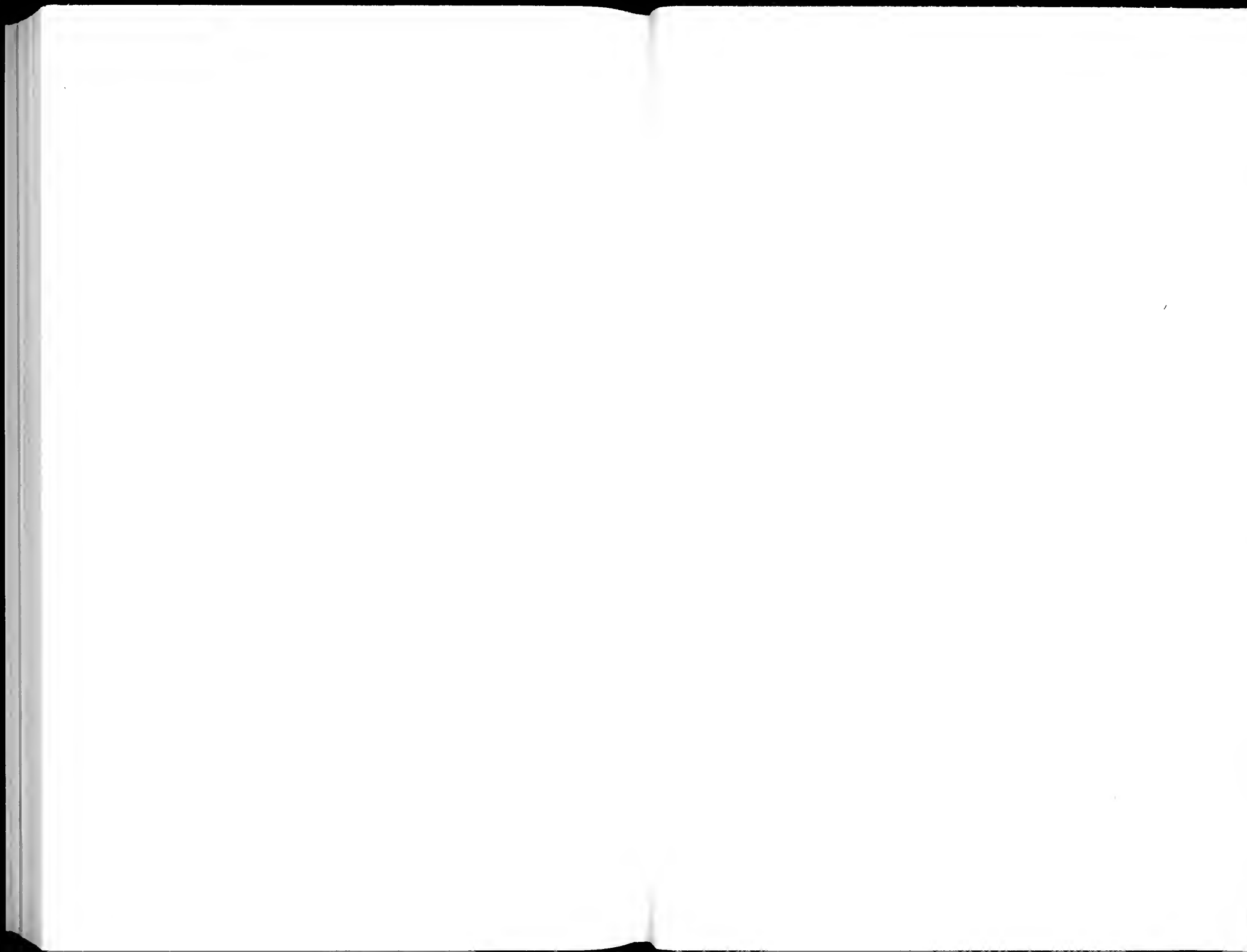
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Evans Lansing Smith began his studies in the field of mythology and literature in 1977 during travel study seminars in Northern France and Egypt conducted by the late Joseph Campbell. He has an M.A. in Creative Writing from Antioch International, and his Ph.D from The Claremont Graduate School. Dr. Smith has taught at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California, Franklin College in Lugano, Switzerland, Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland, and is currently Associate Professor of English at Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, Texas. His publications include a related study of C.G. Jung and his literary contemporaries, to be published in *C.G. Jung and the Humanities*, Princeton UP, and a study of Arthurian myth in Modernism to be published in *Arthurian Interpretations*. This book is the first in a series of studies of archetypal themes in Modernism, subsequent studies to be devoted to alchemy, apocalypse, and mythic images of the feminine.







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